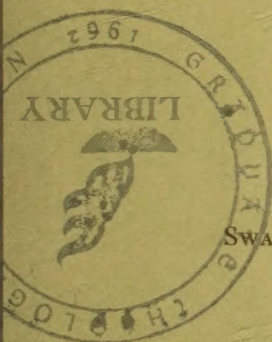


JEEVADHARA

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INDIAN SOUL IN SEARCH OF THE DIVINE

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JEEVADHARA

The Fulness of Life

**INDIAN SOUL IN
SEARCH OF THE DIVINE**

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Kerala, India

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Theology Centre

We have drunk the poison and born the pain

We have slain the demon - 1990-91

(1)

Kerala, India

"Soulfulness" can be described as

"Soulfulness" can be described as

November 1992

Vol. 18

Editorial

The abiding inspiration for a Christian in his search for the Divine is the person of Jesus Christ. It is he who gives this search its direction and purpose. And it is again the person of Christ who gives this quest an identity of its own which can be called specifically Christian. There is no point in denying this identity, or in feeling ashamed of it, because we live in an ecumenical age and are seeking understanding between religions. Genuine understanding between religions is the result, not of obliterating their respective identities, but of offering these identities in love and freedom at the service of each other - maintaining their respective individuality as something beautiful. All forms of understanding among peoples is a form of love which is a fusion of two or more individuals. If in this process their uniqueness evaporates it will be confusion that results rather than fusion.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* is devoted to an analysis of the quest of the Indian Soul for the Divine. It is meant to facilitate the understanding between the spirituality of Christianity and those of other religions and not to substitute one with another. As the Letter to the Hebrews says! "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1). As God was speaking to men in various ways, men were also searching for the Divine in many and various ways.

The quest for the Divine is part of man's search for happiness, realization and fulfilment. This goal was conceived by different people in different ways: some as Light, others as Truth, Immortality, Good, Beautiful, etc. To become divinized meant to reach this ultimate goal:

We have drunk the Soma and become immortal!

We have attained the light, we have found the Gods!

(Rg Veda VIII, 48, 3)

Spirituality can be described as the "sum total of responses which one makes to what is perceived as the inner call of God". This call can be perceived by peoples in different ways mentioned above.

That is why spirituality differs one from another. Therefore a correct understanding of different forms of spirituality and the search for the Divine implied therein will enable us to comprehend the ONE whom all are searching for, and thereby to appreciate the different approaches to that Divine.

The contributors of this issue of *Jeevadhara* have tried to give us an insight into the depth of the different searches for the Divine that flourished in the Indian soil. The vast wealth of spiritual material that has accumulated in the course of nearly three millennia is almost an unfathomable mine to be explored and extracted to our spiritual benefit. It is hoped that this venture will enable us to realize the union of hearts and the oneness of spirit which is the heart of all religious quests:

United your resolve, united your hearts,
may your spirits be at one,
that you may long together dwell
in unity and concord!

(Rg Veda, X, 191, 4)

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Swami Abhishiktananda and his Contemplative Prayer

Introduction

Swami Abhishiktananda is one of the most well-known writers both in India and abroad. However, he is not so known in Kerala as in other parts of India. He had a profound Contemplative experience and a wonderful witnessing power. In order to know his contemplative depth, we must start from the person because for him prayer was life and life was prayer. Therefore we have to study first his biographical background.

1. Life history

He was a French man and his former name was Le Saux. He had lived 18 years as a Benedictine monk in a monastery in France before he came to India in 1947. He had already learned Sanskrit and Tamil. After his arrival in India he spent 10 years with Swami Arupi Ananda in Santhivanam near Tiruchirappalli, during which time he widened his spiritual vision.

Swami Abhishiktananda is the name he took after his coming to India. It means 'Joy of the Anointed' (Christ). It was his intense desire to live a christian religious life in the depths of Indian spirituality that led him to this country. His Christ-experience was expressed in Indian thought, of which Advaita Philosophy attracted him more than any other system. He had a predilection for Upanishadic thought.

In 1957 Abhishiktananda shifted his abode from Santhivanam to a hermitage at Jansu in north Varanasi on the bank of the Ganges in order to lead a more austere and contemplative life. He lived there until a few months before his death. On 7th December 1973 Abhishiktananda had farewell to this world on his flight to the heavenly abode of God, our Father.

His life for more than a quarter of a century in India was truly eventful. He wrote profusely about his experiences in many

books and articles. Even Hindus acknowledged them. His Diary as yet unpublished is a treasure-house of spirituality. Through pilgrimages, satsangha, studies, writings, and deep contemplation he realized his religious life. Dr. Raimundo Panikkar says of him as the greatest of all Westerners who came to India in search of its soul and its religious experiences. We are indebted to his life more than to any other.¹

2. Last days

That his last days were especially remarkable was admitted on all hands. He was already transformed by his austerity and contemplation and surrounded by a halo of this transformation in Christ Jesus. Though many testimonies could be adduced, a few will suffice here.

Swami Chidanandaji the head of the Rishikesh Ashram describes him thus: "Every time he opened his eyes, they were so full of joy. He looked so radiant, happy, peaceful. The look in his eyes is something I shall never forget."²

The Swamiji was a messenger of joy and light because of his openness and surrender to the Spirit. Swami Chidanandaji again testifies: "I could see in his face that an inner light sparkled from him. I know only one other person like that... Before him I palpably felt the presence of one who lived and moved in the Spirit, totally surrendered to the dictates of the Spirit. It brought to his nature an absolute poise and a state of certainty; no doubts in him, but an inner joy beautiful to perceive. I could feel it when I was with him; it came out of whatever he did. To me, knowing him was a wonderful experience of joy and my heart beat in spiritual worship with him - and that too at the very first time we met."³

Mother Yvonne, his compatriot sannyasini, offers a similar picture of his joyful spirit, his humaneness and humility: "Nothing seemed to vex him; he was always smiling and happy.... He was lucid... He did things without ill-feelings or criticising... He was pure like a child, and strikingly honest."⁴

Abhishiktananda is one of those who discovered the soul of India. According to him Christians cannot find it nor make any

impact on India by doing mere social service. Only through deep contemplation can we fathom the depths of India's soul. Abhishiktananda always lived true to his name - joy was to him prayer. He died of heart failure. He had its first attack on July 14, 1973. Then he said: "Joy absorbed my life. It was too much for my heart to contain so that it broke my heart."⁵

The last moments of his life were indescribable. Till that time he could express his thoughts more beautifully than any other. But the joy at the end of his earthly sojourn could hardly be described in so many words. He said that he saw God and saw what God saw and that God and himself were one. In the background of his upanishadic experience he identified himself with the Gospel. His approach to the Gospels was neither notional nor critical nor exegetical, but existential and experiential, as of "Aham Brahmasmi" and "Tat tvam asi". His vision was one with that of Jesus. To have the mind of Jesus and to be united with him is the very end of Christian life. Towards this end he prepared his integral life - mind, heart, body - through meditation, austerity and contemplation. As he was united with Jesus he became a Christian *Jeevanmukta* who is a liberated, divinized soul while still on earth - the highest state a human can attain in his embodied state. Transformation is the attainment of divine perfection by an imperfect being. The end of human life is to attain to this perfection. Abhishiktananda states emphatically that there is no discord at all between the gospel message and the upanishadic experience.

3. Contemplation

a) Ramana Maharshi and Arunachala

Abhishiktananda was constantly in communication with all the well known Acharyas of India, among whom Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) may be said to have been the most influential with him. Fr. Bede Griffiths says that there has not been a spiritual genius as Ramana Maharshi in the last 50 years. He preferred 'being' to 'doing' and is counted among the sages of India. In 1948 Abhishiktananda went to Arunachala to see Ramana Maharshi. The meeting was a parting of ways in his spiritual life.⁶

He had visited Arunachala several times and stayed in silence in the different caves of the holy mountain. In 1952 he

spent five months in those caves and in 1953, the whole of Advent and Lent. Other visits were of shorter duration. During his stay in Arunachala he lived on begged food.

Ramana Maharshi was instrumental in opening the cave of Swamiji's heart and he was a guru who could teach him through silent communication. The central doctrine of the Maharshi was "the mystery of the heart".⁷ In Arunachala Abhishiktananda was taught that in the cave of the heart remains the radiant Mystery simply penetrating those who renounce themselves"⁸

It was Ramana Maharshi who inspired Swamiji to the mystery of the cave of the heart. Arunachala was Abhishiktananda's spiritual birth place. Here he was awakened to the mystery of non-duality (*advaita*) and received the intuitions of interiority, deep Christ-experience, Christian Sachidananda, divine presence and contemplation. Swamiji considers his stay at Arunachala "as a true retreat and an initiation to the Indian monastic life".⁹ Out of this inspiration he wrote that "a sage is the one who has taken refuge in the self-leaving behind his intellect and body".¹⁰

In Arunachala Abhishiktananda has his *Jnanodaya*, his true enlightenment. There he got his "interior eyes opened".¹¹ To him it was a "true revelation" and a "unique intuition which is beyond all conceptualization"¹². What happened was the personal realization of God's all pervading presence in his being, in his action, and in every thing. He calls it an illumination, *satori*, a true baptism or rather an abysmal transformation. He found Arunachala "illuminated and illuminating".¹³ The time he spent there was a period of spiritual immersion and a pilgrimage to discover the secrets of India.

Regarding his illumination Swamiji wrote at the end of his last visit to Arunachala in 1956: "It seems to me that I would explain my actual state after Arunachala as dawn before sun rise, when the sky is already illumined: *Jyotis* (light), *Santi* (peace), *Ananda* (bliss). With the singing of birds in the morning my heart too joins. I wait with joy the apparition of the marvellous dusk."¹⁴

A few months before his death, Swamiji explained his Arunachala experience to his disciple Ajathananda thus: "He

who receives this light (illumination) is brought to a standstill, torn to pieces, of which one cannot speak, it remains outside time and space. In the very solitude of the self one feels it as a mad experience, a sudden eruption of the column of fire and light of Arunachala."¹⁵

Swamiji's intense interiorization process was definitely switched on to Arunachala. There he had the sparkling experience of his theology of "being". He realized that "to be" is the rule of his life, not "to do". He wrote: "I carry in my soul a mystery, my proper mystery, the very mystery of being."¹⁶ His call was to live within, not to stay outside. His task was to surrender his exterior self to the interior mystery and to lead a life in intimate relationship with that mystery. In 1952 he wrote that the grace of India is essentially a grace of interiorization".¹⁷

At Arunachala, the Swamiji's awakening to the Trinity and life in Jesus are highly inspiring. There he concentrated on the problem of "who he is", and understood that "the depth of his soul is the very mystery of Christ".¹⁸ Enjoying the trinitarian relationship, Swamiji said, "My 'I' is essentially trinitarian."¹⁹ In his intuitive vision, he uttered that the Trinity lives in the cave of his heart and there it abides more than himself.²⁰

b) Meeting with Guru Gnanananda and initiation to meditation

After his Arunachala experience he went to meet guru Gnanananda in his Ashram at Tapovanam which is not very far from Tiruvannamalai in Tamilnadu. From here he learned contemplation. Gnanananda was a realized sannyasi of 120 years old. All Swamiji's experience with Gnanananda has been summarised in his book, *Guru and Disciple*, which is acknowledged by many as a spiritual classic of this century.

c) Retreat at Mauna Mandir (House of Silence)

A few months later in 1956 Swamiji paid a last visit to Arunachala in order to integrate in him all he had received spiritually from Ramana Maharshi and Gnanananda. After that from November to December he spent a long and severe retreat at Mauna Mandir in Kumbakonam. He spent 32 days in Mauna

Mandir in complete silence and seclusion. He did not take any book, not even his breviary. Food was served from outside through a window. Celebrating his mass after long hours of meditation and writing his journal were his only activity.

Here we are at the depth and centre of the interior drama which was being enacted in the soul of Abhishiktananda. The central scene of the drama is the interior tension between his fidelity to Christ and his upanishadic and advaitic experience of Arunachala and Tapovana. During this agony he affirms that Jesus is his sat guru and the guide of his interior mystery.² Eventually all his agonies subsided and he experienced that advaitic experience and fidelity to Christ could exist together.

4. His advaitic experience

Swamiji's contemplative vision is basically linked with an advaitic awareness of the divine mystery. As far as this author knows, Swamiji is the first Christian sannyasi to realize a definitive advaitic (non-dual) experience in India. In the Asian Monastic Congress he said: "No one can really speak of an experience except the man whose heart has been captured by that experience."²² Since Swamiji enjoyed the advaitic experience he could speak about it with authority.

The Catholic approach to advaita has been with a preoccupation of keeping the distinction between God and man. According to him advaita does not pose a real threat to Christian faith. In fact it could be an incomparable help in penetrating into the mystery of the Trinity in christian life. We may call this an advaitic dimension of faith, a dimension of depth. The experience of non-duality is a higher interior awareness where one finds that the soul and God are not two. Is this not the very secret of the interiority of christian life taught by St. Paul and St. John?

What is true of mystical experience is also true of advaitic experience. Often languages fail to express the truth of religious experiences. This has happened both to Hindu mystics and their Western counterparts. True experiences often transcend linguistic ties. That being so, one should not too hastily condemn deep

religious experiences. This applies also to Catholics when they look at mystical experiences in non-Christian religions.

According to Abhishiktananda Advaita is "one of the most radical God-experiences in the religious heritage of mankind".²³ Advaita, as Swamiji understood, is a pure experience of God beyond notions and categories. It is different from the experience of God in prophetic religions, yet, it is no less authentic. He realized it in his own person with his deep roots in the Gospel. This gave him the total simplicity or transparency of *Jnani* or sage "who has penetrated to his very source and has known the secret of himself and the mystery of God in his manifestation".²⁴

When one realizes advaita in its plenitude one gets the pure experience of simply "to be". He transcends every expression and every other form. He can only say, "I am" or "I am just that". Since there is an indescribable oneness between the advaiti and God, Swamiji said there is only "one vision and one visionary". This vision welled up from the innermost recesses of his heart.²⁵

5. Contemplative message

Among the very few Catholics who understood deeply the heart of Indian meditation is Swami Abhishiktananda. In fact, he is convinced that Indian contemplation cannot be understood without reference to Indian sannyasa. So he wrote: "In India the highest ideal of pure contemplation has been practised and cherished by the age-long institution of sannyasa."²⁶ He advocates that we have to deepen "our contemplative life, without which no communion is possible in the world of grace".²⁷ He teaches that "Meditation helps towards concentration and the quietening of the mind and leads to the interior silence, without which nothing can be achieved".²⁸

Swamiji has a profound message on contemplation. He insisted on the urgency of a deeply contemplative prayer for all priests, religious and laity. In *A Benedictine Ashram*, we read: "Contemplation stands supreme viewed either from the standpoint of God or from that of man, or from that of the holy Church."²⁹

Swamiji taught that India's gift to the world is a contemplative message. He insisted on it in the All India Seminar Church in India Today, in 1969. He saw India as the land of contemplation. He rightly believed that the proper meeting ground for India and the Church is in the spiritual milieu, above all on the contemplative stage.³⁰ Therefore he tried to penetrate into the secret of contemplation in all aspects and claimed: "A contemplative spirit is indeed the most necessary requisite for understanding anything of the religions and spiritual message of India, and even for establishing any kind of real and fruitful relation on an authentic religious and spiritual level with a Hindu believer."³¹

6. Contemplation and divine presence

As a christian monk Abhishiktananda links contemplation with the profound awareness of God's presence in the divine indwelling in us. "I in them, and thou in me" (Jn 17: 21-23) is the basis of Christian contemplative life. The life of prayer and contemplation is simply to realize God's presence in us. Hence prayer for Swamiji was not so much the content of consciousness as a state of consciousness.³²

It is interesting to cite from the *Journal* where his deep ideas on the presence of God stand out. During his intense retreat and silence in the caves of Arunachala he wrote: "As far as God has not become a reality in our life, we have not set our foot on the ladder. The enlightenment is to have realized this total and all-pervading presence of God in my action as well as in my being as in everything."³³

In his advaitic contemplation, he experienced that the very centre of his soul was God's dwelling place.³⁴ He also says that his life and relationship with God in this world was not on the level of "becoming" and "belonging to" but on the level of "being". As a christian sannyasi he discovered the source of his existence in the very bosom of the Father.³⁵ Hence his contemplation was the seeing of his existence in the heart of the Trinity. His meditation of man as the image of God signifies the unfolding of "the mystery of the divine presence in the inner-most sanctum of man's being."³⁶

Swamiji maintained that to live in a state of prayer, and to lead a contemplative life is nothing other than to live in the actual presence of God. By the very fact of his existence every man is already in the presence of God. Hence to live in the presence of God should be as natural for a christian as a breath of the air which surrounds him...³⁷ In the same context he suggests: "Contemplation and prayer ought to be the very breath of every disciple of Christ."³⁸

For him contemplation is the birth-right of every child of God. He said that there "is no single moment and no single act in christian life which is not faith, prayer and contemplation."³⁹ Hence he says that there are no part-time contemplatives as there are no part-time Christians.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Much more could be written about Swami Abhishiktananda's contemplative vision. His heroic contemplative life in the deepest traditions of Indian religious heritage is a mighty challenge to us Indians who are not in genuine search for the spiritual treasures of India. He found them, enjoyed them, experienced them which gave him a realization which is beyond ordinary human categories. Today we are in need of such contemplative witnesses like Abhishiktananda who taught others by his mere presence. Swamiji, we are grateful to you for your life.

Foot Notes

1. R. Panikkar, Letter to Abhishiktananda, 7 Dec. 1975
2. Sr. Vandana, "A Messenger of Light", *Clergy Monthly* 38 (1974) 499.
3. Ibid. p. 497
4. Ibid. p. 498
5. Ibid. p. 500
6. Abhishiktananda, *The Souvenirs of Arunachala*, Paris, 1978, p. 28
7. Ibid. p. 33
8. Ibid. p. 34
9. Ibid. pp. 13-14

10. Abhishiktananda's unpublished *Journal* (24-7 1952) Ibid. (14-11-1956)
11. Souvenirs of Arunachala, p. 15
12. Abhishiktananda, *L' Autre Rive*, p. 6-7
13. *Journal*, Lent, 1953
14. *Journal* (7-3-1956)
15. *Souvenirs of Arunachala*, p. 15
16. *Journal*, (26-11-56)
17. Ibid. (13-6-1952)
18. Ibid. (22-12-1954)
19. Ibid. (5-6-1955)
20. *Journal*, Lent, 1953
21. *Journal*, (3-12-1956)
22. Idem, "Experience of God in Eastern Religions" in *Cistercian Studies* (1974) p. 155.
23. Ibid. p. 156
24. Idem, *Spiritual Diary*, unpublished
25. Idem, *Further Shore* p. 27
26. Idem, *Prayer*, p. 32
27. Idem, *Hindu Christian Meeting Point*, pp. 11
28. Idem, *Further Shore*, p. 102
29. *A. Benedictine Ashram*, p. 9
30. *Hindu Christian Point*, p. 6
31. *Church in India*, p. 41
32. See Abhishiktananda, *Prayer*, p. 28ff
33. *Journal* (14-7 52)
34. Saccidananda pp. 62-63
35. Ibid. p. 108;
36. Ibid. p. 167;
37. *Prayer* p. 2
38. Ibid. p. 3;
39. Ibid. p. 11
40. Ibid. p. 1

Sunyata in Madhyamika Philosophy and the Christian Concept of God

The title of this paper reveals the problem. We are going to speak on *sunyata* in some specific philosophy. What is *sunyata*? Is it a concept, a term, a symbol, an expression trying to negate the possibility of expression? Unless we know what we speak about, confusion will arise. But I do not know exactly what to speak about when pointing towards *sunyata*. Therefore confusion may arise. And this is precisely what Nagarjuna intended to demonstrate: When we think on the basis of the principle of non-contradiction and apply it to what we call the Absolute we end up in troubles.

It seems to be easier with a Christian concept of God. But it only seems so. Because what after all is Christian? And what is a concept? The terms "concept" and "conception" have something to do with begetting and bearing a child, i.e., a concept is supposed to give life, to create and regenerate. Well, what does this mean in relation to what we call God, [the Absolute or the Mystery?

These preliminary remarks lead right into the present Buddhist-Christian discussion. But it is not my task here to continue this discussion on some kind of unidentified basis or intention. I rather would like to reflect on a few terms or symbols or concepts which are involved in this discussion and create again and again stumbling blocks in the process of finding and appropriate language for dialogue.

I cannot survey the whole history of Buddhist thought, simply because I am not competent. Neither do I claim to know the history of the Christian concept of God sufficiently. Therefore I refer only to a few building blocks of these histories where it seems to be useful for the purpose. A first paragraph will deal with the problem of knowing the Ultimate, a) in Madhyamika and b) in Christianity. Secondly I will speak on *karma* and creation as respective key concepts of the two philosophies we are speaking about. Thirdly I will focus on *sunyata* and Trinity as

the very expressions of the Ultimate and fourthly I will draw some conclusions concerning the findings of this small study.

1. The Means of Knowledge

A sober and consistent classification of the *pramanas* is not only the basis for all Indian thinking, but for philosophy in general. Unless I know how to know I cannot know.

a) Madhyamika

In general we can distinguish four possible sources of knowledge.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Sense-perception (<i>pratyakṣa</i>) | accepted for empirical reality (<i>samvrti satya</i>) |
| 2. Reasoning, inference (<i>anumāna</i>)
comparison (<i>upanāna</i>) | but not ultimate
(<i>paramārtha satya</i>) |
| 3. Revelation (testimony (<i>śabda</i>)) | not accepted |
| 4. Intuition | |

Madhyamika accepts the first and second *pramanas* for the empirical reality but the Ultimate can be known properly only by the fourth, intuition.

Sense perception is certainly the basis for our decisions in day-to-day life. But when it comes to the question of meaning, ultimate reality etc., sense perception is misleading. If reasoning or inference is based on the sense-perception only, it is naturally also misleading. Intuition might be a source of knowledge but it has to be clarified what we mean by intuition and how it does relate to the other possible sources of knowledge. Revelation is not regarded as *pramana* by the Buddhist either.

Without going too much into details of the Buddhist Abhidharma, it can be, however, clearly seen, that the rationalism implied in this system is limited. As Conze points out the rational approach was only preliminary and had to be followed up by spiritual intuition. Further, the choice and definition of *dharma*s is mainly dependent on the teaching of the Buddha who is taken as authority, because only fully enlightened ones have insight into reality. And after all rationality depends mainly on what

we are used to think. It is a habit to consider certain things and conclusions as rational and others not. The paradigm changes in philosophy and sciences are an expression of the change of scope and rationality.

What then is Nagarjuna's logic? What is the scope of his reasoning? It is a pure negative dialectics. It wants to show that it does not lead anywhere. Nagarjuna destroys the arguments including his own. He wants to point out that reason is not capable of grasping the truth in non-contradictory terms. He does not only argue against other systems but he argues against any possibility of any system. He wants to outline the limits of reason in order to clear the ground for what he calls *prajna* and what we could translate, may be, as "intuition". This "clearing the ground", however, is a necessary step. There is no sound spiritual knowledge or mystical path without this rational clearness or cleared rationality. It intensifies the mind, crushes it and sets free a reaction which finally leads into *prajna*. *Prajna*, however, belongs to a different order of intelligibility, because it does not exclude "yes" or "no". It is beyond all possible determinations, devoid of any classification and therefore – *sunyata*. This will be explained later on.

Prajna is a kind of direct perception, neither mediated by sense perception nor by inference. It is *anubhava*, not *anumana*. We could translate *anubhava* here with "direct correspondence in being" or "resonance", as I will point out later. It is a direct awareness of the mind concerning itself, an intuition into things as they really are.

It is not my point here to give a phenomenological answer to what I think *prajna* is. It is enough to say, that *prajna* is a *pramana*. It is necessarily beyond reason, because it reconciles all basic logical contradictions.

I just want to give one example which is more than that, because it points to the very core of Buddhist experience: the development of *bodhicitta*.

Bodhicitta marks the essence of Mahayana Buddhism, and it is particularly emphasised in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in all four basic schools. It can be translated as "enlightened mind".

Sometimes this is interpreted as the union of *prajna* and *karuna* wisdom and compassion. In so far it would merely point out the union of mystic intuition and practice toward the neighbour or the union of insight and behaviour. But this is not all. The pair to be brought into union is actually wisdom (*prajna*) and method (*upaya*), symbolized in Tibetan Buddhism by bell and *vajra*. The Method includes *karuna*, but it is more. It is the intellectual as well as moral way. But even this might be too narrow: it is the WAY in all its aspects.

Bodhicitta, therefore, is an enlightening attitude and an accomplished state of awareness, each of which is both a means to the goal and the goal itself. Attitude implies action. And action is formed in a certain attitude. Through this accomplished awareness one will be able to see things as they really are and as they appear in diversity, yet not apart but in, with and under the practice of compassion. A process of purification transforms consciousness gradually and leads into a different reality, it is a different perception of the one reality. Thus, a whole process takes place which has also cognitive implications. This is the dependence of *prajna* on *bodhicitta*, or rather it is to say that both are one.

Now, there is a most interesting paradox in the whole argument. The final, the Ultimate, the Absolute is both the way and the goal at the same time and under the same conditions (therefore qualifying the logical contradiction as a genuine paradox). We will see that in later Japanese Buddhism this paradox became the crux of the matter, and it is so with the Christian concept of God as well: God or the Absolute is both, the underlying ground and the goal, the process and the result.

For the rational mind this is a contradiction. Nagarjuna has set out to prove nothing else than this, that in the quest for the Absolute mind necessarily produces contradiction.

b) Christian

Already St Paul antagonizes the word of the cross and natural reason (1 Cor 1, 18). For natural reason the cross is mere foolishness but for the one who is experienced in the life-giving

mystery of the cross it is highest wisdom. The cross is the symbol not for accumulative knowledge gained through objectivity or perception of objective things, but it points towards the kenotic character of spiritual insight which pierces through the external thing into the core of reality. It indicates a different level of knowledge.

The experience of the presence of the Spirit was so strong among Christians that they did not bother much about a clear-cut rational expression of this experience. Pentecost was an *ekstasis*, and only later theologians tried to rationalize the whole story. In fact, rationality had probably more to do with the diversifying power of Babel than the unifying event of pentecost. Even Origen still describes theology as a hymn. It is the reflection or the mirrored image of what is going on in deeper levels of reality on to the level of mind.

Now, the whole development of the early Church took place under the signs of the Christological and the Trinitarian debate. Both actually imply each other, though they developed in consecutive steps. No need to go into historical details here.

The Trinity has its roots in a double experience which is necessarily linked with the life of Jesus Christ. The realization that Jesus is the Christ is one aspect. It implies the similarity or identity of Jesus with God. The appearance of the Spirit among the disciples marks the other aspect. It implies the immediate presence of God in the experience of the Spirit. Christology and pneumatology were the basis on which Trinitarian developments had to be built.

The question was: how can we know, and how can we express this knowledge in rational terms? The problem is older than Christianity. Plato tried to think the unity of God and came to the conclusion that this is a logical impossibility. In his famous dialogue, Parmenides, he discovers that to think the One (*to hen*, and *ekam*) is not possible because in any possible formulation the "is" of the sentence could be only copula and not a statement of being. Otherwise the One would participate in Being, and this means duality. The One does not have names and cannot be known because it is the subject of all knowledge (Parmenides 137 c). The

similarity with the Upanishads cannot be overlooked. This is the basis for all theologia negativa, which we find in Clemens, Origen, Dionysius Areopagita and many others.

In order to appreciate the special function of the negative theology we have to make a big leap into the scholastic and modern discussion concerning the nature and existence of God. In St Thomas we find the five ways of establishing an argument for the existence of God, which later were discussed basically as the cosmological and teleological argument.

The whole thing is some kind of *anumana*. From a given experience based on sense-perception I draw certain conclusions which lead me to the assumption of a first mover, a higher governing principle of the universe etc. Thomas, however, is aware that the whole way of argumentation depends on the proper understanding of *analogy*. Only if we use the analogy properly, i.e., we realize the right proportionality between similarity and dissimilarity we do not go astray.

As everybody knows Kant smashed the whole system and proved the invalidity of all *pramanas*, concerning the Absolute or God. Thus he led us back to Plato's cave and chained us there again: Whatever we know, whatever we think, we encounter nothing else than our mind. Everything appears to us under the conditions of categories, and the categories are mental constructions which we cannot overcome. However, mind can know that it does not know. And this non-knowledge was Kant's biggest achievement. What Nagarjuna had done about 18 centuries earlier in the East Kant did thoroughly for the West. But both of them turned neither towards agnosticism nor nihilism but used their rational criticism or critique of the ratio in order to establish the certainty of truth or the knowledge of the Absolute in a different order altogether. Nagarjuna pointed towards *prajna* as a direct insight into the true nature of reality, and Kant used practical reason, i.e., the necessity for a moral order.

Now, what is negative theology in this context? It is also starting with the experience of the phenomenal. Then it asks for the ground of the phenomenon, and declares that ground non-phenomenon. This is the basic pattern of negative theology which

occurs again and again in different variations. I suppose that we have to say that the *pramana* here is still *anumana*, but leading to negative results. It is not a negation of *anumana* but a negation of the phenomenon as content of our conclusion. Thus, the expression of God is still conditioned by our experience though this experience is negated. We have, in other words, still a dualistic principle at work. God is beyond, but not "beyondness" of "here" and "beyond". Of course, Dionysius and others do not say that by negating a certain content of our consciousness we reach a positive statement about God: + (-a). But they did not clearly see the dualistic inadequacy of the whole thought-process clearly enough either. This distinguishes their approach from Nagarjuna's considerably.

The Christian experience is founded in Jesus Christ believed to be the self-revelation of God. To know Him is to know God in an act of participation in the divine mystery. Thus, we have to reach some kind of conformity with Jesus Christ. Our mind is to mirror His mind, our being is to resonate with His being. Only then will we know Him. Knowledge here is an existential-relationship of love, of mutual indwelling, a communion of consciousnesses which participate in each other's activity of knowing. Knowledge is, *henotherai* (becoming unified) but not in the sense of mere identity where the individualities would collapse but a going into the other, experiencing the other from inside, a unique subject-subject relationship [which is a constant process of personalization. I refer to a brilliant article by Mrs Beatrice Bruteau on "Insight and Manifestation".²

This revelation of God in Christ had been understood as the *logos*, i. e., an intelligible source of knowledge or the very principle of intelligibility. But the source must open up, flow down and distribute the water all over the place in order to make the land fertile. Similarly, we have to distinguish certain levels of encountering the *logos*, according to the degree of manifestation of the "beyond".

To illustrate my point I choose an example from Luther, not because the same thing is not found elsewhere, but because I am familiar with it and you may not be so much in touch with this particular tradition-

In his First lecture on the Psalms (1519) he speaks about four different levels of the *logos* (*verbum*, word), which has an extreme close parallel in the Hindu tradition as I will show in a minute.

The *first level* is the *verbum internum*, the inner word, which is and remains in God as his eternal power, his intelligibility or *sakti*. This becomes manifest or incarnate in the second level, i.e., in Jesus Christ. There it is embodied and therefore conditioned by time and space, yet of universal significance. This level as well as the following two are the *verbum externum*.

Now it gets further down in the hierarchy of levels and becomes in one way even more conditioned on *level three* as the Holy Scripture which contains the stories and reflections of level two. But on the other hand the Scripture secures the transmission of tradition all over the world, thus it has also a deconditioning character.

On *level four*, he says, that the Scripture as such is just a book. It has to be read, to be spoken, preached and heard. This is the living word, the *viva vox evangelii*

Now for Luther our knowledge of God goes normally up from level four via 3, 2 to level 1. But there are also direct connections between me and each level without the mediation of all the stages. These are extraordinary spiritual experiences.

In the Hindu interpretation of *vac* we have also four stages (for the first time mentioned in Maitrayani Samhita III, 70, 16, if I am right) which correspond with the stages of revelation of the Absolute: *para*, *pasyanti*, *madhyama*, *vaikhari*. *Para vac* is the unmanifest *brahman*. *Pasyanti* is the dimension of the Absolute in its revelation in cosmic form (therefore related to *isvara*). *Madhyama* is the mentally mediated experience of the revelation, in cosmic form connected with *hiranyagarbha*. And *vaikhari* is the word which you can hear through the sense perception, corresponding to cosmic form with *viraj*. We find similar steps of revelation and its perception in Tantric Buddhism in the form of different manifestations of the Buddha nature. I refer only to the doctrine of

three, or four, eventually even five *kaya*'s. All these levels or *kaya*'s are important. We have to go through them to reach the highest goal. They are supportive for the knowledge of reality which, however, is firmly established in the dialectical process and its overcoming in *prajna*.

2. Karman and Creation

a) Karman

Karman is a basic concept of Buddhist interpretation of reality. It expresses the total interconnectedness of all things and events. Each particular thing or event is the result of previous constellation and it is a cause again for further happenings. We have to see this in the light of *pralīyasamūtpāda* or interdependent origination, which is just another term for *sunyata*, according to the *Madhyamikas*. Nothing has any existence in its own (*svabhava*). *Karman* is a beginningless web of interconnected potentials which are realized under certain conditions forming countless necessities of origination. Though there is no beginning of *karman*, there is an end. When the true nature, *buddhatva*, is realized as the very nature of one's own mind, the karmic cycle is exhausted. Since the realization of the *tathata* is supported by the grace of Buddha (in the form of Avalokitesvara, for instance) we can assume that grace, *buddhatva*, *tathata*, *sunyata* etc. form a different order altogether. After all, karmic necessity can be changed by spiritual practice. (This is the whole point of *dharma*.) That means, that *karman* is limited necessity.

Karman is both action and result of action. Each action has its result in itself which has to be compensated in order to maintain cosmic balance. Since this is not possible in one life only, there is the necessity for rebirth according to *karman*. Thus, the understanding of *karman* is the rational foundation of rebirth in the cycle of existence (*samsara*). This holds true for both Buddhist and Hindu thought.

Obviously, there is no need for a creator nor would he have any function in the system. The question "what is the ontological ground of *karman*" is not asked, since the total interdependence of *karman* does not require a ground. The net hangs by itself, as it were.

However, when interrelatedness or *sunyata* is realized, the karmic necessity is overcome. It is a leap into a different dimension of reality which is not outside or apart from the karmic relations but beyond it in a sense that it is more comprehensive. What is this state of realization of *sunyata*?

b) Creation

Before probing a bit deeper into *sunyata* we shall make a few remarks on creation. Elsewhere I have pointed out³ that creation must be understood in the context of Trinitarian dynamism if it is a proper Christian notion of creation. What does it mean?

My suggestion is to understand the Christian concept of creation more in terms of *creativity* than in the model of a divine craftsman who long ago acted somehow and observes now what he has been doing.

It is interesting to see that the creed of the Old Testament does not start with creation. Much older are the stories about the Exodus, the Sinai-tradition etc. The people of Israel experienced new possibilities in their history. Ways opened up which had been unthinkable before. There is always a surprising action of God which changes the expected course of events. This goodness of God is a kind of creativity which breaks through the chains of determinism and necessity. It is the divine dynamism which overcomes the *inertia* of reality in the material, psychic and mental spheres.

On account of those experiences of the creativity of God the fundamental universality of creative goodness was experienced and expressed in the two creation-stories.

Hence, the doctrine of creation does not speak so much about a universal principle, but about the assurance of God's universal mercy expressed in His creativity. It is a symbol of newness. It points to the beyond "in, with and under all phenomenal experiences".

The concept of *karman* is not at all contradictory to such a view of creation /creativity. Creativity is breaking through the

law of *karman*. It is the leap into the unpredictable which however, manifests and then repeats itself under phenomenal, i.e., karmic conditions. Thus, creativity has something to do with the realization of the true nature, *sunyata* etc. It is an openness towards and from the realm of mercy, in religious symbols, which changes and eventually annihilates the chain of *karman*. It is not the opposite of *karman*, because then we would have a duality of two principles interacting with each other. *Sunyata* is not the opposite of *samsara* or *karman*. That would be still a non-emptied emptiness, because of being determined by its opposite. Hegel raises the same point with regard to eternity. Eternity cannot be the opposite of temporality, because it would have its limits on the border of the two. Eternity transcends both, temporality and endlessness. It is a different level. Similarly, *sunyata* has to be emptied also. It is the *beyondness* of any determination. It is something like what is called creativity which transforms reality through creative insight that includes all possible levels of manifestation, i.e., of karmic reality.

But here we are already going into an explanation of the world-views which are based on *sunyata* or the Trinity.

B. Sunyata and Trinity

a) Sunyata

There are two fundamental senses in which the word *sunyata* is used in the Madhyamika texts.⁴ First, *sunyata* refers to the interrelatedness or reality. The argument here remains on the phenomenological level. The usual scientific experiment gives evidence, that all phenomenal reality is interrelated in a net of causal connections. Nothing can be regarded as existent in its own (*svabhava*). Nothing can be isolated from the whole. All is empty of self-existence, i.e., *sunya*.

The second meaning of the term points towards the transcendent mystery of reality. *Sunyata* in this sense means *beyondness*, *anuthata* or *nirvana*. It indicates that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. All the potentialities of the phenomenal are not *nirvana*, but *nirvana* is beyond the differentiation of potentialities

and actuality or of part and whole etc. That is, it is *sunya* which I therefore like to translate as *beyondness*.

Of course, every body knows that Nagarjuna holds the famous equation of *nirvana* and *samsara*. But this has to be understood properly. The basic distinction in Madhyamika philosophy (as in Sankara) is between relative (*vyavaharika*) and ultimate (*paramarthika*) truth. From the relative or phenomenological standpoint *nirvana* is not *samsara*. The equation is valid only from the absolute standpoint which has transcended the very distinction in any regard. This, however, is not possible on the basis of rationality but requires *prajna*, insight into reality as it is without the limiting and conditioning defilements of the mind.

Sunyata, therefore, does not at all mean the assertion of non-existence,⁵ but it is the denial of the dogmatic standpoint of existence. It is the denial of essentialism. Things in their real nature are devoid of essence (*nihsvabhava*) because having essence they would be unconditioned or uncaused which contradicts experience. They are relative or related in *nature* and not just accidentally. They are neither momentary nor permanent but *tathata*, which is beyond both of them. Therefore, Nagarjuna does not deny reality but he denies the accessibility of reality to reason.⁶

Sunyata is the void out of which everything comes. It is, as Iama Govinda calls it, *plenum-void*.⁷ It is the reality, the nature of all things. *Nirvana* does not add anything to *samsara*, but it is its very nature which we, however, normally do not realize.⁸ The difference between *nirvana* and *samsara* is not an ontological one but it is a difference in our way of looking, it is an *epistemic* difference.⁹

The Absolute is the Reality of the real (*dharmanam dharma*). It is the Being of being, it is implicate in all things.¹⁰ Or in Stcherbatsky's famous translation of Madhyamika Karika XXV, 9: "Coordinated here or caused are separate things. We call this world phenomenal. But just the same is called Nirvana, when viewed without Causality, without Coordination."¹¹

The same text in Murti's explanatory phrase:¹² "The Universe viewed as a process, it is the phenomenal. Having regard to cause

and conditions (constituting all phenomena: we call this world) - phenomenal world. This same world, when causes and conditions are disregarded, i.e. the world as a whole, *sub specie (aeternitatis)* is called the Absolute."

The question is: How can we disregard causes and conditions and arrive at the whole? Or: Is this implicate reality of the real really the Absolute or *sunyata*?

I doubt and disagree on this point with Murti's interpretation. If the reality of the real were the Absolute or *sunya* is an implicate reality, we would still have the subtle duality of the reality of the real (implicate) and the phenomenon as expression of this reality (explicate). *Sunyata* is not the first of these two but it must be emptied of this duality as well. It is beyond differentiation into implicate and explicate. It is absolute beyondness. This, of course, does not mean that it is spacially or temporally beyond phenomenon. It rather transcends spaciality and temporality in such a way that it includes them. I dare to formulate that *sunyata* is a relationship in itself devoiding itself, constantly of essentiality and therefore establishing this relationship. I will come back to this point later. The Absolute - as Murti says - is cognized in a non-dual intuition, *prajna*, "It is that intuition itself."¹³

Here it is extremely interesting to look into the etymology of the word *sunya*. According to Stecherbatsky¹⁴ it comes from the root "*svi*" which means "to swell, to expand", or to grow. Now, the root "*brh*" from which *brahman* is derived, has the same meaning. Therefore, *sunyata* is a potential, an energetic process. *Sunyata* does not mean that there is not an absolute reality. It means, that this reality is not an essential sameness or identity, but a process which requires distinctions, i. e. growth. It is, as Lama Govinda says, a continuous giving and taking as it is experienced in our life-breath.

Of course, different schools of Buddhist thought have interpreted *sunyata* rather different ways. It is not possible here to give an overview on this complex history of interpretation. But the thing is clear: Nagarjuna's Madhyamika philosophy suggests the equation of *sunyata* and *pratityasamutpada*. This means two

things: first, reality is to be considered as non-dual continuum, i. e., the absolute and the phenomenal are mere perspectives or aspects and not separate ontological realms. Secondly, this one reality is an interrelated whole, something like a continuous process or self-movement.

b) Trinity

Christianity's concept of God is extremely interesting in this context. Often it is not clear what is meant when we speak about Trinity. I said already that the Trinity is a symbolic expression of the spiritual experience of the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives as one with God the Father. Now, we discovered the Spirit as our innermost being. The Spirit of God dwells in us as it dwelt in Christ enabling Him to be in the Father and the Father in Him. As they are one we are one in this Spirit and the oneness is the indwelling God or our dwelling in God as it is stated particularly in John's Gospel. The Trinity, as John of Damascus says, is *perichoresis*, it is a continuous self-movement, a dance actually, which expresses the dynamic self-existence of God. Thus, God is not an undifferentiated unity or a monistic principle. But He is interrelatedness. What we experience as phenomenal or created world is supposed to participate in His interrelatedness, i. e., in His knowledge and love. God is a differentiated oneness, and we participate in the Oneness of the Spirit in Him.

The point may become clearer when I quote the following sentences:

"It is not the nature of... (mystical intuition) to remain in a state of... (the void) absolutely motionless. It demands of itself that it differentiates itself unlimitedly and at the same time it desires to remain itself. This is why... (the void) is said to be a reservoir of infinite possibilities and not just a state of mere emptiness. Differentiating itself and yet remaining in itself undifferentiated, and thus to go on eternally in the work of creation... We can say that it is creation out of nothing... (The void) is not to be conceived statically but dynamically, or better, as at once static and dynamic."¹⁵

I could not imagine finding a better and more profound interpretation of the Trinity in philosophical terms. But actually, and this should be a creative surprise with regard to our discussion, this quotation is from D. T. Suzuki, the greatest interpreter of Zen-Buddhism to the West. He is explaining *sunyata*, and I have only omitted the Sanskrit terms and substituted them by Suzuki's own English terms.

The Trinity is the reservoir of infinite possibilities, differentiating itself eternally in three persons and yet remaining the oneness, a differentiated oneness. Our terms and notions are static, and that is why we cannot think the two together but have to create a paradox. Using John of Damascus's image of the dance we see much clearer: the dance is dance only in so far as it remains the same structure or pattern or form, but is differentiated oneness which creates itself eternally (the divine creativity!) in an ongoing and perfectly interrelated movement. In other words, each movement of the dance has its meaning and form only in the perspective of the whole; and the whole is only in so far as it realizes itself in the continuous explication of different "steps".

Much more could be said and all the subtleties of the Johannine "in" (I in the Father; the Father in me. You in me; You are one as one in another etc.), this most profound and dynamic non-dualism, would be brought out. Yet, this is enough to give the direction of thought.

4. Conclusion

What I have presented here is an attempt of a cross-cultural synthesis concerning the concept of *sunyata* and the Trinity. We allowed the symbols to mirror each other. Or in acoustic terms: we put one symbol into the realm of vibration of the other and observed its resonance, and we did this on mutual basis. I do not use the term resonance by chance, because it has been used by another great Buddhist master - Zen Master Dogen - to point towards the transcendent mystery of Buddha-nature or *sunyata*; reality is the interrelated movement of cosmic resonance.¹⁶ But to follow this up would require another paper.

For the Christian concept of God, resonance is of utmost importance. As St Paul says we do not know God as *anthropoi psychikoi*; but as *anthropoi pneumatikoi*, people whose spirit is resonating with the Spirit of God. When God's Spirit works in us, is united with our spirit, and when our spirit is tuned to God's presence, we know. This is best described as a phenomenon of resonance, of receptivity and creative participation in the divine *perichoresis*, as explained above. Resonating receptivity is probably one of the most appropriate descriptions of the cosmic mystery of love as well. We see again the closeness of the experience of love and knowledge. Thus, the Christian and the Buddhist *pramana* are experientially reflected in *sunyata* as interrelatedness or the Trinity as *perichoresis*.

Further, we saw that the necessity of *karman* reflects the experiences of cosmic interconnecteuness on the level of phenomenal reality. This holds true for a Christian as well as Buddhist concept of reality.

On the level of an ultimate perspective, however, we saw that this divine creativity is the all-encompassing order. This aspect might be more important for a Christian though it is not absent in the Buddhist experience.

In the later Buddhist philosophy of Zen-Buddhism this problem got further attention especially by Zen Master Dogen (1200-1252). He is concerned to explain that all existences are the Buddha-nature. The self-creative reality of Buddha-nature constitutes all the phenomena of the universe. But the Buddha-nature is at the same time more than the sum of all beings. Dogen can say that the "sentient beings are the true body of the entire universe" (Shobogenzo, Samgai-Yuishin). But this does not mean an identity or relationless equation. Without going into details, I just quote this beautiful verse from Shobogenzo which, I think, is a perfect expression of the earlier Madhyamika intuition, and it is an unsurpassable statement on the Trinity as well:

"Though not identical, they are not different;
though not different, they are not one;
though not one, they are not many."¹⁷

It is this "differentiating itself and yet remaining in itself undifferentiated", this dynamism of an unlimited process (as Suzuki calls it) what Christians experience as the Ultimate Reality of the Triune God. And this reflects also the Christian's encounter with God, who becomes totally united with Him in love and knowledge. But one remains a distinct consciousness in the process of the divine perichoretic unification. Thus, we participate totally in this dynamism, which is God. We are in an eternal process of merging into Him and He into us, but we are never sucked up into an undifferentiated identity. The final Christian experience does not point towards a motionless substance which is identical with itself, but towards the creative participation in the *plenum-void*, which is indeed *sunyata*.

Notes

1. E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, London 1932, p.20
2. B. Bruteau, Insight and Manifestation, in: *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1983, p. 301 ff.
3. M. Von Bruck, Advaita and Trinity, in: *Indian Theological Studies* 20 (1), March 1983, p. 37 ff.
4. K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nagarajuna's Philosophy* Delhi 1978, p. 253 ff.
5. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, (Allen & Unwin), London 1980 (IV), p. 97.
6. Murti, op. cit., p. 126
7. Lama Anagarika Govinda, *A Mahayana View of Reality*, in: *ReVision* Vol. 2, 2, 1979, p. 36
8. Murti, op. cit., p. 162
9. Murti, op. cit., p. 163
10. Murti, op. cit., p. 232
11. Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*, Delhi, 1978, p. 206
12. Murti, op. cit., p. 233
13. Murti, op. cit., p. 236
14. Stcherbatsky, op. cit., section I, p. 36
15. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in East-West Philosophy* (ed. by Ch. A. Moore), Honolulu 1951, p. 45 quoted by W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London 1961, p. 176 ff.
16. According to Dogen, "Cosmic Resonance" (*Kanno-doko*) enables enlightenment (*Shobogenzo*, *Shinjin-gakudo*). All

Buddhas and sentient beings resonate in unison throughout the universe. Cf. Hee-Jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen-Mystical Realist*, (The University of Arizona Press) Tucson/Anz 1980, p 302 ff.

17. Dogen Zenji, Shobogenzo, Zenkil quoted in: Hee-Jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen-Mystical Realist*, p. 164

Michael von Bruck

Buddhist-Christian Approaches to Mysticism

In the following pages we propose to make a comparative analysis of the Buddhist and Christian approaches to mysticism. However, it is not an attempt to present the two traditions in any detail. Rather, we presuppose a fair knowledge of the Buddhist and Christian mystical traditions, and proceed to compare them. Again, mysticism, Buddhist as well as Christian, is understood here only in its common sense and traditional form, leaving out minute distinctions made by the various schools and systems within each tradition.

A second point to remember while going through this article is that there is an apparently greater emphasis put on the differences of the Buddhist and Christian approaches to mystical experiences. This is because the present author is interested more in discovering the individuality of each religion, and then in suggesting how the different religions can complement each other. There is room for complementarity only where there is difference. If all religions made the same points with the same accent, there is no possibility of any of them contributing anything new, and thus enriching others. Hence the present article starts with certain points of differences in the Buddhist and Christian approaches to mysticism, but subsequently specifies that such differences imply mutual complementarity rather than opposition.

In the first place, I am afraid, the term mysticism, in its classical Christian sense, is unfamiliar, if not unknown, to Buddhism. In general, a mystical experience for a Christian means an extraordinary gift of God granted to a chosen few*. Such an understanding of mystical experience is not found in Buddhism. Let us take it for granted that a mystical experience is the highest possible spiritual experience one can hope for. The Buddhists, however, do not believe, at least as far as their explicit statements go, that such an experience is given to man by another being like God. For them a spiritual experience, even the highest possible one, is what man attains for himself by his own efforts. The Buddha is reported to have said to his disciples, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Seek salvation on your own in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves" (*Mahaparinirvana - sutta*). The Buddha's own enlightenment experience is a classical example in this regard. He claims to have achieved it for himself by his own prolonged efforts for years. It was for him, far from being an unfolding of God's mysteries, a self-discovery of himself. According to the Buddhist belief, the light with which the Buddha was enlightened came not from outside, but from himself. He was his own light, so to say.

Secondly, the Buddhists do not believe that even the highest spiritual experience is open only to a chosen few. In Buddhism, every individual is called for it, and if he or she wills, it is attainable sooner or later. For the Buddhists, all genuinely spiritual experiences are also the highest possible ones, and, therefore, are open equally to everybody. Let us try to make this point clearer.

In Christianity mystical experience is not a common experience, nor is it a necessary sign of final salvation. One may be saved even without having any mystical experience at all. That is, according to Christianity, a genuinely spiritual experience is

*This is only one view. "All of us are already blessed with the contemplative gift, with the seeds, at least, of contemplation. The one given fact of the spiritual life is union with God and this vital union of human will with the Divine is the essence of contemplation" (Mysticism). Cf. Jeevadhara 54, pp. 372-403 (Editor)

not necessarily a mystical experience, unless the latter is defined in a very loose sense of the term.

Buddhism knows only one kind of experience that saves, i.e. *nirvana* or enlightenment. It is not only open to all, but is also a necessary condition for the final liberation, nay it is itself the liberation. It not, therefore, an extraordinary gift or concession made only to a few; it is not a gift, either, but an achievement within the reach of every individual.

It is even doubtful whether in Christianity a mystical experience is a sure sign of final salvation at all. A Christian believes that as long as he is in this world, even if he has had a mystical experience, he is in danger of falling back, although in fact it may not happen. A Christian is never sure of being saved until the moment of death. Even St. Paul at the height of mystical experience felt uncertain about the future. That is, at least in principle, a mystical experience is not a guarantee that one is saved once and for all.

But a Buddhist believes that once an individual has had the experience of *nirvana* or enlightenment (*bodddhi*), he is liberated once and for all, even though he may continue to live in body in this world, as it was the case with the Buddha himself, and as is claimed to be the case with the *Bodddhisattavas*.

This further implies that Christianity allows different grades of the final experience of salvation or liberation. It is a fond Christian theory that although all are called to perfection, all may not attain it in the same degree: the saints in heaven may be in different grades of perfection or sanctity, although all of them are saved once and for all; there everybody is rewarded according to his or her merits, and everybody is equally satisfied with what he or she receives. The saints are not all of the same stature.

But Buddhism believes that in the state of liberation everybody is of the same stature: fully enlightened and absolutely free; there is no room for a gradation of sainthood. One is either absolutely liberated and fully liberated, or not. Until one is absolutely liberated, and fully enlightened, one has to keep on trying even if it means a process through an infinite number of births and deaths. There is no stopping before one is definitively in the state of *nirvana*.

Here again is another difference. The Christians do not believe in more than one life. He has only one chance — the present life. He may pass or fail the test of this life. In either case he will be graded to be in first class, second class or third class! But for the Buddhists, one can take the test again and again, through the repeated births, till one finally becomes fully enlightened and unconditionally liberated. Moreover, a Buddhist is never in danger of being condemned for eternity. If he wills, he always has one more chance. This means that for a Buddhist any genuinely spiritual experience is also a mystical experience, and similarly any mystical experience is identical with the final liberation.

Now, coming to more doctrinal points, there is a real difference between the Christian and the Buddhist understanding of mystical experience. For a Christian, mystical experience is inevitably the experience of an I-Thou relationship of one kind or another. It always involves two persons, God and man, conceived to be mutually related either as bride and bridegroom, or father and child, or friend and friend, or master and disciple. It is always an experience of the union of two persons in mind and heart leaving out the possibility of affecting their identity to the point of one losing his in the other. A mystic may speak in terms of identity or even in monistic terms, but the listeners are not supposed to take them seriously nor literally. In Christian circles, terms of identity and monism are always interpreted as symbolic expressions referring to the intimate and personal union of the mystic with God, and not any more than that. Even the words of Christ that 'he and his father are one' are not understood as implying their personal identity but only personal union. Of course, there is the unity of the Godhead, but it is equally a matter of faith that there is real distinction between the three persons in God. Similarly, when the great mystic St Paul exclaimed, "I live but not I, Christ lives in me", he was not identifying himself as Christ, but only expressing his experience of the latter as the very ground of his being and life. In Christianity, it is one thing to recognize that man 'lives, moves and has his being in God, and another thing to say that a mystic gets intimately united with God. The former indicates identity on the level of existence, while the latter refers to the union of God and man on the level of personality. It may be that at the same time identity of essence and distinction of persons in God, so there is also between God and man

there is an underlying identity of existence while on the level of personality they are really different from each other. Perhaps in Christianity, the height of mystical experience consists in having an intuition of this mystery of one and other between God and man.

In Buddhism, the case is very different. To start with, there is no reference to another person in the explanations or descriptions of the enlightenment of a Buddhist. (In fact, even the term 'person' is likely to sound strange to Buddhism.) The enlightenment experience is not at all understood in terms of relationship of any kind. Far from being an experience of a personal union, *nirvana* or enlightenment for a Buddhist is the discovery of one's own identity. If at all, as far as most of the descriptions go, it is undoing of all relationships, with other beings and persons. Hence the heavily negative tone of most of the descriptions of *nirvana*: it is said to be the extinction of the fire of passions, the destruction of all possible attachments to things and persons, the stopping of all cravings, freedom from the ego, or getting rid of the sufferings and other experiences in the realm of *samsara*. Of course, these negative descriptions have at once their positive implications, too. For example, the absence of suffering means the experience of joy, so that *nirvana* turns out to be a state of boundless happiness. Similarly, as a result of the extinction of all passions, *nirvana* is very well understood as a state of calm, quiet, peace, equanimity, composure and wisdom. All the same, the descriptions cleverly avoid references to personal relationships with other beings including God.

However, the differences in the Buddhist and Christian approaches do not necessarily mean opposition between them, but rather their mutual complementarity. For example, the Christians may very well agree with, and even accept, all the Buddhist suggestions, only they will have to add something more to complement those suggestions in the light of Christian revelation and faith. For instance, it is acceptable for the Christian to say that a mystical experience, or for that matter any genuine religious experience, is an enlightenment, but he would at once add that this enlightenment comes from Christ, who as St Paul says is the "wisdom of God" (1Cor 1:24). It is the Spirit of Christ dwelling in oneself that enlightens one, and brings about one's liberation from the passions or the "works of the flesh". Similarly, it may be said in general, that for a Christian the Buddhist position with

regarding the understanding of mystical experiences is all right as far as it goes, but he would hasten to add that in his view it does not go all the way, and offer to complement it further with insights from Christian revelation and faith.

Apart from the above mentioned kind of complementarity, it may be observed that there are quite a few points with regard to the content of a mystical experience on which both the Buddhist and the Christian will agree. For example, for both of them mystical experience is something ineffable and even incomprehensible in human terms and concepts. According to Zen Buddhism, the enlightenment (*satori*) is a state in which one 'thinks without thinking', 'meditates without an object'; there the mind is empty of all ideas and images, symbols and characterizations, and the mind is even reduced to a state of emptiness, or is itself stilled to the point of nothingness. Zen is, thus, "a special teaching without Scriptures, beyond words and letters pointing to the mind's essence of man, seeing directly into one's nature, attaining enlightenment". A Christian mystic will certainly and promptly endorse the ineffability of the mystical experience. "All (Christian) school-mysticism) had their way of leading to contemplative silence, peace beyond words, beyond images, beyond ideas, beyond desire . . . it is blind because it contains no thoughts and images, being just like nothing; it is no more than a delicate and simple interior movement of love in silence. . . it is the 'naked intent of the will' . . . (Christian mystical) authors speak of it as the *silentium mysticum* indicating that beyond all thought and speech there lies a realm of exquisite silence" (William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (1971), p. 40). A mystical experience, in Buddhism as well as Christianity, is bound to be incomprehensible as well as inexpressible in human terms and concepts, precisely because in the last analysis it deals with the Absolute, which by definition is beyond time and space, and therefore, also beyond concepts and words. The human language and logical thinking being very limited means of knowledge and communication cannot at all adequately grasp or express the Infinite with which the mystics deal. The human concepts and words can deal only with the world of common sense (*samanya-laksana*) as the Buddhist logicians would say, and can give only approximations of the Absolute, which is its own definition (*evalaksana*), and therefore indefinable (*anabhilapya*).

The Zen Master instructs the disciple, "If you meet the Buddha, kill him". This may sound cruel and even blasphemous. But in

fact it refers to a mystical intuition, and means, as Johnston (op. cit., p. 51) says, "If you see the Buddha, what you see is not the Buddha. So slay him!" Then the same author says that this applies also to Christian experience: Properly and piously understood one can say, 'If you meet Christ, slay him!' And the meaning 'what you see is not Christ'. Get rid of the Buddha as an object of thought, it means, if you want to realize your Buddha nature. And in the same way one can say, get rid of images of Christ if you want the high contemplative union with Christ which is the real thing. "People had different images of Christ as a prophet of John the Baptist come to life. But Peter recognized him as the Son of God, and he knew it not by logic and reasoning but by intuition, an enlightenment. In the New Testament God is to be worshipped not on this mountain nor Jerusalem, but in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21-24) which alone take one to the realm which the eyes have not seen, nor the ears heard nor the human minds entered."

The use of *koans* in Zen Buddhism as a means of arriving at enlightenment is worth mentioning here. *Koan* in Chinese means "a public document" or "a public announcement". But in Zen they mean a short anecdote usually in the form of a conversation between a master and his disciple. A koan invariably contains a contradiction or a paradox which cannot at all be resolved by any logical thinking, and therefore leads the listener to a dilemma out of which he must emerge not through logic but through direct vision of reality. That is, a *koan* persuades one to give up the usual way of thinking and reasoning, and to adopt rather irrational ways of 'seeing' or 'looking into the reality'. For an example of *koan*: Once a Japanese Master, Hakuin, clapped both hands, and there was a sound. Then he lifted up one hand, and said, "Show me the sound of one hand". This is obviously a question that affronts reason, and therefore non-sensical, too. But, in wrestling with this and with many other *koans*, the aspirant is believed suddenly to experience illumination, *satori*. The implication is that one can solve the riddles of life, which have no logical solution, only in the state of enlightenment, *satori* or *nirvana*. I feel that it is very true in Christianity. As Johnston (op. cit., p. 63) says the Gospels abound in *koans* such as: "Let the dead bury their dead, come and follow me!" or "He that loves his life will lose it" or "I am the vine and you are the branches", or "This is my body". The Christian message is indeed full of absurdities from the human point of view.

The cross of Christ was folly for the Greek and a stumbling block for the Jews. Christ is himself the greatest of koans, the most absurd contradiction, which no amount of human thinking and logical argument can resolve with full satisfaction. How can one prove with logical arguments that the infinite could become a finite creature, which indeed is the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. Or, what explanation can man give to the Trinitarian understanding of God, that God is one and three at the same time. Thus for an outsider, an unbeliever, Christ and his message is a problem which has no solution, and a contradiction, a *koan*, which cannot be resolved at all. But for a believer it is a mystery which will unfold itself in the enlightenment of resurrection.

The resurrection experience of Christ seems to have some correspondence with the enlightenment experience of the Buddha. Christ's experience was a total transformation of personality, in body and mind. His was rather an awakening of his consciousness of himself as the Son of God, just as the enlightenment of Gautama was rather an awakening of his consciousness of his own infinite dimensions.

But descriptions of Christ's experience substantially differ from those of the Buddha's experience. One is described in terms of the redemption of the body from death and corruption, while the other is described in terms of a deeper vision into, and consciousness of, the inner mechanism of the universe. This difference of descriptions may be accounted for by the difference of cultural contexts of the two experiences. The experience of Christ takes place in the Jewish culture and the experience of the Buddha takes place in the Hindu context. Both the Christ as well as the Buddha broke with the respective culture to some extent. Neither of them, however, was really able to transcend the given culture, and to be the subject of a culture-free experience. Consequently, Christ's experience receives descriptions in terms and concepts proper to the Jewish cultural context: terms and concepts such as "sin", "redemption" and "transcendence", "transformation", "immortality", and "resurrection". The Buddha's experience, on the contrary, receives descriptions in terms and concepts proper to Hindu cultural context: terms and concepts such as "*karma*", "transmigration", "stopping of *tr̥sna* and suffering", and "enlightenment of consciousness".

Spirituality of the Bhagavata Purana

A *Purana* is 'an old narrative'. The Puranas themselves describe it as, "that which lives from ancient times", or, "the record of ancient events"¹. Says Panini in this context: *Purana* (*purvasmin kale*) *bhavam*². The Purana is not mere fiction or legend. It is a veritable storehouse of philosophy, religion, ethics, politics, history, and spirituality. A good part of the purana is of course, mythology. But then, myth is not fiction; myths are not false narratives nor are they allegories. They express the collective mentality of a given age. Therefore, Herder is wrong in saying that, myths are, "pardonably false beliefs". For Lang, myths are survivals of earlier social norms. For Mircea Eliade, a myth is a reenactment, an attempt to restore man's primitive paradisaical, unfallen state³. The Pauline contrast between myth and truth has been the constant Christian paradigm in any controversy with non-Christian religions. Even the great Scripture scholar Fr. Benoit O. P. believes that "myth introduces error and fiction into the very essence of religious speculations about the Divinity"⁴. Today, sociologists and philosophers consider myth to be the unspeakable truth, higher than truth at the physical and metaphysical level. According to Aristotle, myth is wisdom. Like light, myth is invisible. It is something that we cannot manipulate. According to Raimundo Panikkar, Myth is that on which we cannot lay our finger without dispelling it. Thinking has a corrosive power. Myth, God, person etc., cannot be object of thought. If we think out God, He vanishes⁵. The best and noblest way to God is through myth and mysticism, where we transcend the barriers of time and space and become the contemporaries of the Deity and live an auroral life. The aim of Hindu mythology is to enable the ordinary man to soar high into the region of the deity and become enraptured in the company of celestial beings for a time and thus undergo an inner purification and attain the vision of God by means of trance, produced by the musical recitation of the Purana. Purana recitation is not a hobby or pas

time, like the reading of a novel. It has to be read as a cultic act, in a sacred setting at a holy place and at a festival season. It is cult in the literal sense of the term. It is one of the five great sacrifices which a good Hindu is expected to perform daily.

Of the eighteen Puranas, the Bhagavata Purana is the most popular and the greatest. It deals with the ancestry and life of Sri Krishna in 12 sections called *skandhas* and it contains 18,000 *shlokas*. A typical purana consists of five parts called *lakshanas*: cosmogony, creation, genealogies of gods, the ages of the world, and the dynasties of kings⁶.

The date and authorship of the Bhagavata Purana are still disputed. Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, a contemporary of Sri Krishna, is the reputed author of the Bhagavata Purana, as also of the other Puranas. The most sober scholars and historians like Bhandarkar, S. N. Dasgupta and Winternitz fix 1000 A. D. as the most probable date of the Bhagavata⁷.

The Contents of the Bhagavata

The Bhagavata is a vast mine of spiritual wealth, wherein pearls of great price lie buried beneath a huge jumble of bone-dry and insipid narrative of genealogies, myths, and legends of gods and men of heroic deeds. An extraordinary gallery of devotees and heroes on the spiritual path we find exhibited in colours so subtly mixed that they steal over our hearts and exercise a haunting charm. Christian spirituality can certainly be enriched by the touching stories of Ajamila, the great sinner redeemed by the invocation of the Lord's name, the stories of the child devotees Dhruva and Prahlada, the Asuras Bali and Vritra, the poor Brahmin Kuchela, whom the Lord was proud to claim as his comrade, the noble virtues of Bhishma and Yudhishtira, and the starving Rantideva, who prayed for no other boon but to remain in the heart of the afflicted and allay their sufferings. The poet is highly skilled in marshalling a gigantic array of Vedic, Epic, and Puranic episodes and didactic teachings to instruct the faithful in the Dharma of Hindu spirituality, keeping a good distance away from the subtle logic and metaphysics of the *Darsanikas*, i. e., philosophers. The Bhagavata Purana is Hindu catechetics at its best. Raghunathan says that "it is the enchanting figure of the eternal Krishna that

the great artist builds up stroke, by stroke against the sulphurous, stormtossed background of a world in dissolution. On this glorious figure he lavishes all the delicacy of his spiritual perception, all his wealth of poetic imagination, and he plunges ever and anon into the depths of the Self and returns bringing with him handfuls of pearls''⁸.

The Philosophy of the Bhagavata

Except Sankara and Ramanuja, all the great Vedantic Masters have written commentaries on the Bhagavata in order to prove that their particular point of view (*Darsana*) is based on the Bhagavata. And although the Bhagavata is mainly theistic in content, we find numberless passages of an Advaitic import. In fact, the earliest available commentary is by the Advaitin Sridhara-Swamin. It is impossible to find a consistent philosophy in the Bhagavata, which is far from being systematic in treatment. It accommodates all schools of philosophy, ranging from Advaita Monism to Sankhya Dualism. In ch. xxviii of book eleven, we find these uncompromising Advaitic statements: "All Duality is unreal; there is nothing that can be shown to exist which is other than the *Atman*. The manifold wrought by Nescience out of *Guna* and *Karma*, which has been regarded before the dawn of knowledge as not different from the *Atman*, because it was an illusory appearance in it, is negated by knowledge".⁹ The *Atman* itself was neither changed nor restored to a pre-existing state. The essential identity of the *jiva* with Brahman, the irrelevance of *Karma* for the man who has attained enlightenment, and the truth of *jivanmukti*, are repeatedly affirmed in the Bhagavata. S. N. Dasgupta, the great historian of Indian philosophy says: "It may generally appear rather strange to find such an extreme idealistic Monism in the Bhagavata, but there are numerous passages that show that an extreme form of Idealism recurs now and then as one of the principal lines of thought in the Bhagavata"¹⁰.

Theistic Spirituality

But the main trend of spirituality in the Bhagavata is theistic. That the world does not exist apart from Brahman may be said without implying its unreality. The Bhagavata describes the *jiva* as atomic, the Nyaya-Vaisesika view. The use of such different descriptions for the One Reality as *Brahman*, *Para-*

malman, and Bhagavan, has led to the suggestion that there are different grades to be discovered in Him. *Maya* is spoken as a "power" of the Lord. The distinction between God and man is clearly stated in many passages, though there are numerous pantheistic passages to be found throughout the text of the Bhagavata. But on the whole, *Bhakti* spirituality, which is the central theme of the Bhagavata, does postulate the distinction between the Lord and the devotee. Thus we read in one passage: "The man who sticks to his *svadharma*, will attain in this very life the knowledge that liberates, and if he is fortunate, will become devoted to Me"¹¹.

Bhakti is extolled as unmistakably as in the Gita. Says Krishna: "Give up all *Dharma* and put yourself into my hands". How the Formless could exhibit numberless forms that could be the object of adoration, are problems for which philosophy has not provided satisfactory answers. But for the God-intoxicated mystic and Bhakta, they offer no problem at all. What baffles mind and speech, may yet yield to the gentle warmth of the heart, in which the Lord is held confined by the silken cords of love that bind His feet. The Absolute is not merely existence and knowledge, but preeminently Bliss and God is described as *Ananda-varupa*, of the form of Bliss. *Raso vai Sah* says one of the Upanishads about God, meaning His blissful nature.

The Rasa Lila

The Bhagavata Purana considers the Absolute as pure bliss and the manifested form of the Lord is his sport or *rasa-krida*, purposeless game, a child-like mirth of Krishna, the Supreme Man, with his own shadows, or his own powers in the form of women cowherds (Gopis) though he was satisfied in his blissful state¹². The identification of Vasudeva Krishna with the supernatural Bhagavan (Lord) Krishna raised a moral problem. The first was king Parikshit himself, one of the chief protagonists in the Bhagavata. He could not understand why Krishna, the protector of universal morality (*Dharma*), acted otherwise by inflicting outrage on the wives of others, when, as being the manifestation of the Lord, he should be self-contented¹³. In reply, Suka made out the following points: super-human persons are not to be judged by the ordinary standards

of morality; they are like fire which consumes whatever is put into it. Secondly, the Gopis and their husbands are nothing but the ephemeral forms of the One Absolute. What is taking place is not real history of different persons, but the Divine Sports (*lila*) of the one that appears as many under the influence of Nescience. According to the commentator Sridhara Swami, the five chapters on *Rasa-lila* (erotic sports) are aimed at extinguishing men's carnal desires. Krishna had already triumphed over sex¹⁴. The vedantin Nimbarka presumes that Radha was the daughter of Vrishabhanu, and married wife of Krishna and the Gopis to be her attendants. But there is no reference to Radha in the Bhagavata, and hence this school of thought has extorted Radha by acrobatic feats of grammar and logic. The Vallabha school of Vedanta believes that the *rasa-lila* of Vrindavan takes place with the apotheosized Krishna (Divinised Krishna) and they explain the whole episode allegorically. But this is fantastic and crude hermeneutics. According to this school, when Krishna manifests himself in the mind of the devotee, it is the birth of the Lord. About the Vrindavana sports it is said that with the annihilation of sins and with the Lord's grace and with various forms of devotion, there develops in the devotee the *bija-bhava* (spiritual disposition), due to the intensity of which the *guna* products are destroyed. By spiritual service (*seva*) the *bija-bhava* becomes a *vyasana* (passion), and leads to the attainment of *Brahma-bhava* (becoming one with Brahman). The gross and subtle bodies of the devotees are destroyed and they are endowed with bodies suitable for *rasa* or Divine sports. Then they enter the region of *rasa-lila* that goes on eternally. This is *moksha*, or final liberation¹⁵.

The Bengal school of Vaishnavism has shown great ingenuity in regularising the relation between Krishna and the Gopis. For Jiva Gosvami, the Gopis are Krishna's legal wives—*Krishna-vadhvas*. But Bhagavate Purana X. 29. 20 speaks of Krishna referring to them as other's wives—*patayas ca vah*. Therefore, Visvanatha Chakravarti has recourse to another ingenious explanation: the Gopis had two kinds of husbands: the Gopas were their human husbands while Krishna was their divine husband and Krishna's dealings with the spiritual wives transcends conventional moral standards¹⁶. All religions use the romantic love between lovers as a symbol of the union of God and His devotee. Thus we have the Song of Songs of the Bible and the Canticle of the Soul by St. John of the Cross.

and the *Gita Govindam* of Jayadeva in Hindu Bhakti mysticism. And rightly, the *Rasaprakāśi* is the very heart of the Bhagavata. It is not erotic, sexual love, but Divine love, expressed in the symbolism of pure human love. And Suka says that in all those nights of the rasa-lila, the Gopis' husbands never found them missing from their homes. Suka again says that the Lord delighted only in the Self and not in the 16000 wives and that the rasa-lilas were merely such an entertainment as the child finds in looking at his own image in the mirror. The text repeatedly stresses the point that there never was any physical union between Krishna and the Gopis. Krishna himself tells the young maids of Vraja, the wives of the sacrificers, and the Gopis who played with him that those who loved him could not hope for such union with him¹⁷. The human form depicted in the Bhagavata is so ethereal, so generalised and free from human limitations that it is not easily distinguished from the image of the god of one's worship that the Yogis sees within his heart in deep meditation. Such God-realisation comes as the consummation of the process of self-denial in the literal meaning of the term. And the emptying out of the ego, so that the real Self (Atman) might shine in all its dazzling splendour, is the purpose of the spiritual discipline that Krishna imposes on all those on whom he sheds his grace. One need not, after all, feel very much dejected by worldly bliss, for Sankara says that even the worldly bliss is nothing but a particle of the supreme Bliss that is Brahman, *Ananda*.

S. Bhattacharya rightly criticizes: "The concept of Krishna giving their spiritual husband does not give him the licence to exhibit amorous behaviour which stinks at the nose of ordinary beings".¹⁸

the Divine Grace (Anugraha)

The creation and dissolution of the universe is due to Divine Will. So, it is due to divine grace that man becomes attracted to the Lord and his faith in penance deepens; his passion (*rati*) for the Lord intensifies and his devotion is self-less. Revelations both internal and external are an index of divine grace. He is ever self-satisfied but his worship reflects back upon the worshipper and enhances his inner qualities and makes him eligible to receive the

divine grace. Bhagavan is all bliss, i.e., all love. Divine grace is the radiation of the love of the Bhagavan on man. The grace of the Lord may assume a frowning appearance and it may even inflict pain and death on the devotee, but he knows that it is the loving Lord's grace and he submits to it cheerfully.

Avatara-Vada (Theophany)

According to the Bhagavata, the whole world-order is a divine sport, "the free, unmotivated self-expression in a spatio-temporal order of the Lord's supra-spatial, supra-temporal perfect self-enjoyment"¹⁹. The *Lila-vada* is closely related to the *avataravada*. In an avatara (descent, manifestation, but *not* incarnation), the Absolute, by virtue of its Maya-power, sportively descends from the plane of His absolute unity to the plane of the relative plurality without losing his essential transcendental character. Although God and his manifestations are consubstantial, the Bhagavata classifies the avatars as: (1) *amsa*, (2) *kala* and (3) *Amsa-kala*. *Amsavata* is a form of God possessing God's omniscience and omnipotence which may or may not be revealed depending on the exigencies of the situation. *Kalavata* are God-filled empirical souls, e.g., the gods, Vyasa, Kumara, etc. *Amsakalavata*: they are the border cases between *Amsavata* and *Kalavata*, e.g., Rishabha in Skandha V of the Bhagavata. From a temporal point of view, God assumes *Manvantaravata* to supervise the working of gods and men in different *manvantaras*. A *manvantara* is a cosmic age lasting 4,320,000 years, i.e., the life-span of a Manu. Similarly, God assumes *Yugavata* and *Kalpavata* to supervise the cosmic ages called *Yuga* and *Kalpa* (The four Yugas-Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali-together form 12,000 years; the Kalpa lasts 8,640,000,000 years). But according to the Bhagavata, *Lilavata* is the best for in this avatara the Lord assumes any form (of men or animals) only to abide by the desire of the devotee. In this form the Lord behaves like any ordinary human being (e.g., Rama's lamentation over the abduction of Sita) but restores the moral order, showers grace on his devotees and departs leaving behind supreme glory.

Vyuha-Vada (The doctrine of Emanations)

Original Bhagavatism seems to have been free from the once detested emanation-doctrine (*Vyuha-vada*) of the *Pancharatra* sect.

Vaishnavism. The Vyūhas are Vishnu's emanations in the form of his closest relatives: brother Balarama, son Pradyumna, Aniruddha his grand-son and Vasudeva, the purely human form of the divinised Krishna. The Tantrikas gave symbolic meanings to the four Vyūhas of the Lord and also to his limbs (*angas*), accessories like his vehicle, attendants (*upangas*) and weapons (*ayudha*) and articles of dress and ornaments (*calcpas*). Thus, the Kaustubha gem represents the pure consciousness of the Jiva, vanamala his Maya, his sacred thread the mystical syllable OM, the ear-rings the Sankhya and Yoga systems. Later on the number of the Vyūhas rose to nine and finally to twelve.

Path-Ways to God-Realisation

The Bhagavata does not merely advise us to meditate on the Lord but describes the various modes of worship and service leading to God-realization emphasizing at the same time its preference for the *Bhakti-marga*, path of devotion, as different from the *Jnana-marga* (way of knowledge) and *Karma-marga* (way of action). Some critics take the Bhagavata to be an elaborate commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*. But both are independent works; the Bhagavata is of later origin. It states that a man should continue to do the duties prescribed in the Vedas until he feels a disinclination and feels an attraction to listen to the stories of the Lord and puts complete faith in the Lord. The author of the Bhagavata defines religion as that mode of life which leads to devotion to the Lord.²⁰ Devotion is a spiritual discipline which immediately generates renunciation and motiveless spiritual knowledge²¹. And these arise simultaneously just as, after an intake of a morsel of food, satisfaction, nourishment and the quenching of hunger take place simultaneously.²² Commenting on this verse, Sridhara-Swamin points out that this triad of effects of the first morsel leads to a higher degree of satisfaction with the next morsel forming as it were a chain of causation. This is the significance of the statement of the Bhagavata that *Bhakti* (Love/Devotion) leads to a higher plane of Love/Devotion.²³ According to the Bhagavata, the three *Purusharthas* – (Goals of life: *artha* or wealth, *Kama* or sexuality and *Dharma* or practice of virtue or duty or religion) the ritualistic and spiritual teachings of the Vedas and their ancillaries like

Logic, Grammar, all converge upon the need of self-dedication to the Supreme Person (*Purushottama*)²⁴ and this 'self' in self-dedication includes whatever one does and regards as his own such as wife, children, and one's own body²⁵. This dedication purifies all our acts²⁶.

Different people tend towards the Lord under different compulsions, depending on their temperaments, needs, and life-situations. Thus they may concentrate their mind on *Bhagavan* through sexual urge, hatred, fear, affection, loss of wealth, disease, loss of dear ones etc., but they all ultimately become one with him. But Bhakti demands that this attachment to the Lord should not be a transient affair, as long as one's selfish motive lasts. Bhakti can start germinating under some traumatic experience, but then, once one has begun the journey, there should be no looking back even when the Lord seems to be deaf to the prayers and miseries of the Bhakta, because love implies the readiness to suffer any pain for the sake of the Lord even when he smites his devotees. This is the meaning of disinterested Love. Thus, in the Bhagavata, we read of the Gopis attaining the God's feet initially through sexual urge, Sisupala (Krishna's cousin brother) through sheer hatred of God, Kamsa through fear, Yudhishtira through friendship, the Vrishnis through blood-relationship, and persons like Narada through true devotion.²⁷ But the highest type of Bhakti is through self-less devotion shown in meditation and marked by the dominance of pure *sattva* (goodness) and it leads to the experience of divine trance. The other types of devotion, influenced by the *Gunas* of *rajas* (energy), *tamas* (inertia) or *sattva* mixed with other mental modes, are inferior types of Bhakti. Although the Bhagavata (like the Gita) classifies devotion into three categories according to the predominance of a particular *guna* (quality of the mind) Sridharan in his commentary on the above puts up a fantastic array of eighty one types of Devotion!

Classification of Bhakti

The Bhagavata has delineated the ninefold path of Bhakti. It consists of (1) *Sravaṇa* (listening to the Bhagavata text), (2) *Kīrtana* (chanting the Lord's praises), (3) *Smarana* (meditating on the Lord), (4) *Pada-sevana* (serving the feet of the Lord), (5)

Archana (worship) (6) *Vandana* (prostration before God's image), (7) *Dasya* (service), (8) *sakhya* (friendship), (9) *Atma-nivedana* (self-sacrificing). This is treated as a continuous series in which one form merges into the next, culminating in union with God, but as Jiva Gosvami asserts, even one form of devotion is efficacious to attain to Godhead.²⁸ Most of these *sadhanas* (spiritual exercises) are found in the *Rigveda* but other steps are derived from the *Panaratra* tradition, as they pertain to idol-worship. With faith in the Lord (*sraddha*) one should receive the Lord in one's mind, by listening to the Name of the Lord and his sportive exploits. This annihilates all sins where traditional methods of expiations, such as Vedic studies, sacrifices, donations etc., fail. This *sravana* leads to *Kirtana*, the highest stage in this Kali-yuga. It yields the same spiritual fruit as was obtained by meditation in the *Krita* age and by sacrifice in the *Treta* yuga and by worship of the Lord in the *Dvapara* yuga. *Kirtana* or chanting the Lord's praises in hymns and *Blajans* is the river of nectar of God's episodes, which satiates the spiritual thirst of the Bhaktas, who thereby transcend human torments and passions²⁹.

The Kirtana-form of devotion reaches deep into the heart which is then drowned in meditation. This is remembrance (*smarana*) which is really God's presence in the depth of the human heart. It thoroughly washes out all inner impurities due to our past deeds, more effectively than could be achieved by any other means³⁰.

Through continual remembrance, the devotee is led to the primary stage of God-realization and he clings to the lotus-feet of the Lord. Once he tastes the honey in the lotus of the Lord's feet, he never feels any attachment to worldly objects. At the touch of this divine grace, new spiritual horizons are widened and he feels real fervour of devotion, non-attachment to worldly objects and persons and attains genuine serenity and peace of mind³¹.

Though the Bhagavata describes three types of worship, the Vedic, the Tantric, and the mixed, it prefers the third type; but it gives more importance to internal cult than to external cult. Especially those who have advanced in spiritual life, need not do external worship; they can worship the Lord in their hearts: *adhyatma-puja* or *hridaya-puja*. Says the sacred author:

"In his own body, cleansed by *Vayu* and *Agni*, he should contemplate the subtle Paramatman as the summit of *Nada* or God in the form of Sound".³² *Vardana* is unqualified submission to the will of God in recognition of His supremacy over men's affairs; its physical expression is the prostration before God's image or before God's representatives, such as one's parents, teacher, spiritual guide etc. *Dasya* is the sense of belongingness to God. *Sakhya* is still higher; the sense of servitude to the Lord leads the devotee to win over God as his friend as good wives do in the case of good husbands. *Almanivedana* is the highest stage; out of the highest love and devotion, the devotee surrenders himself totally to God. This is the greatest *archana*: self-sacrifice. About this self-surrender the Bhagavata itself says: "When he dedicates to me all his works and activities, I choose to make him the best of men; then he attains immortality and becomes fit to be one with Me".³³ The practice of repeating the Lord's name (*Nama-japa*) is recommended as of great efficacy in spiritual life. This type of prayer is not confined to Hinduism only; the Hesichast prayer or the Prayer of Jesus, developed by the Eastern Christian Monks, and the Islamic form of it, are examples to prove that all religions attached great importance to the invocation of the Lord's Name.

Other Paths

The Bhagavata has accepted with some variations the methodology and practice of Patanjali's *Ashtanga-yoga*, but it rejected his philosophy. While *Yama* and *Niyama* have five steps each in Patanjala-Yoga, the Bhagavata has twelve steps in each of them. As to the place of *jnana-yoga* vis-a-vis *Bhakti-yoga* the Jnana-yoga of the Bhagavata forges a remarkable compromise between Patanjali and the Upanishads on the one hand and Tantrika thoughts on the other.

The Bhagavata Religion

Unlike the Upanishads, the Bhagavata is not a doctrine of mere metaphysics; it is a religion or way of life. It is not esoteric in its approach, but catholic; it invites men and women of all castes and even outcasts, of all races; to come to the feet of the

Lord to get rid of sorrows and attain true joy and happiness by the simplest of all *sadhanas*, viz., emotional and ardent love towards their Creator and protector. From the devotees God expects nothing but the surrender of his sins and miseries and the noblest of human oblations – love offering, which even the greatest sinner and the poorest of men can give. It does not call for bodily torture, pilgrimages, costly sacrifices, perpetual silence (*mauna*) or the *sannyasa* form of life. The student (*Brahmachari*), the householder, the forest-dweller, and the *sannyasi*, can all follow this religion of love. And without *Bhakti*, *sannyasa* becomes mere hypocrisy and the *grihastha* state becomes full of pain and laborious. Where there is love, there is no labour, and even if there is labour, that labour itself becomes an object of love, as St. Augustine beautifully puts it. The Bhagavata religion seems to have been a reaction of the common people against the cold religion of the metaphysically oriented Upanishads and the exaggerated cultism and sacerdotalism of the Brahmanas, whose religion was quite meaningless and expensive from the financial point of view and revolting to human sentiments with its elaborate system of animal (and even human) sacrifices. It may have arisen also as a defensive mechanism against the new religions of Buddhism and Jainism. In fact, the Buddha was the first to be called *Bhagavan*. The Bhagavata *Dharma* (religion) comprises those moral qualities and spiritual exercises which purifies the mind for receiving the Divine grace. The Bhagavata includes under these the ten *Yoga* virtues of *Yama* and *Niyama* (restraint and Culture), also the so-called decorations of the mind, such as universal friendliness (*maitri*), kindness (*karuna*), joyfulness (*mudita*), and indifference (*unoksha*), the six Vedantic virtues of serenity (*sama*), self-control (*dama*), tolerance (*titiksha*), renunciation (*uparati*)—, concentration and faith, the nine fold path of devotion and Tantric methods of spiritual worship. They are thirty in all. But the singular Bhagavata dharma is chanting the name of the Lord.

The best follower of the Bhagavata religion is called *Bhagavato-bhama*. Tranquil and possessed of unitary vision, he launches a crusade against the sorrows of the world. ³⁴

The *Bhakta* is not an egoist, unmindful of his social obligations towards his suffering brethren. His feelings of *maitri* or universal

compassion drives him to give help to the needs of others. In this context, Prahlada said: "I would not seek *mukti* (liberation) till a single being remains in bondage".³⁵ Full of love and grace God waits, nay invites all, with the enchanting music of his flute to come and surrender themselves at his sacred feet. The sacred author concludes the Purana with these memorable words: "Surrender yourself completely to Him; remember His name; the Supreme Lord annihilates your sins and removes all your sufferings; to that supreme Hari, I bow."³⁶

Man's greatest enemy is the Time process; it makes him sad and weary. True devotion to the Lord makes one laugh at Time, and he readily crosses over to Timelessness without any fear or remorse, but full of joy. Such was the case of king Parikshit who was under a curse to be killed by the cosmic serpent Takshaka. After drinking the *amrita* (nectar that gives immortality) king Parikshit easily allowed himself to be killed by the poison of the Time-Serpent and attained liberation. Even the god Brahma was wonderstruck at the fantastic way Parikshit obtained liberation. Bhakti is the only way for liberation in this *Kali Yuga*, or age of sin and wickedness, for Kali was the friend of unrighteousness. While Parikshit was conquering the world, Kali took shelter under him and besought him not to destroy him, and Parikshit spared the life of Kali, knowing fully well that Bhakti (Love) could flourish only in the Kali Yuga. If there was no Original sin, we could not have got such a loving Saviour, exclaims St. Augustine. '*O felix culpa*', exclaims Augustine while reflecting on cosmic sin, committed by mankind symbolised by Adam, the primitive man. The sage Narada explains that while Bhakti retained freshness, youthfulness and beauty, her two sons, *Jnana* (metaphysics) and Renunciation (*Sannyasa*) became emaciated, old and feeble. Its allegorical meaning is that when there is no Love of God, Knowledge and Sannyasa remain fruitless and barren. God is Love.

Notes

1. Cf. *Vayu Purana*, 1. 123; *Matsya Purana*, 53, 63
2. Panini, 4. 3. 23
3. Cf. 'Myth', in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vols. V & VI, p. 47

4. Benoit, O. P., *La Prophetie*, 1947
5. Raimundo Panikkar, *Intra-Religious Dialogue*, *passim*.
6. Cf. *Amara Kosa*, I. 6. 5.
7. Cf. Tagare, *The Bhagavata-Purana* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. xxxv
8. N. Raghunathan, *The Art of Srimad-Bhagavatam*, in, J. O. R., Vol. VI. part II, (March 1947) pp. 131-32
9. *Bhagavata Purana*, Book, XI, ch. 18
10. Surendranath Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV, p. 33
11. *Bhagavata Purana*
12. *Ibid.* 10. 32. 10
13. *Ibid.* 10. 33. 27-29
14. *Commentary on Bhagavata Purana*, 10. 29. 33
15. Balakrishna Bhatta, *Prameya Ratnakara*, 39-44
16. Cf. Jiva Gosvami, *Krama Sandarbha*; Visvanatha Chakravarti, *Sarartha Darsini*; Rupa Gosvami, *Ujjvala Nila Mani*; S. Bhattacharya, *Philosophy of Srimad Bhagavata*, I.103-108
17. Cf. N. Raghunathan, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, (Madras, 1976) pp. xxxiii-xxxiv
18. S. Bhattacharya, *Op. Cit.*, p. 103
19. S. Radhakrishnan (Ed.) *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, (London, Allen & Unwin, 1967) Vol. 1. p.125
20. *Bhagavata Purana*, 11. 19. 27
21. *Ibid.* 1. 2. 7.
22. *Ibid.* 11. 2. 42
23. *Ibid.* 11. 3. 31
24. *Ibid.* 7. 6. 22
25. *Ibid.* 11. 3. 28
26. *Ibid.* 11. 21. 15
27. *Ibid.* 7. 1. 30
28. Jiva Gosvami, *Sat Sandarbha*, p. 545
29. *Bhagavata Purana*, 4. 29. 40
30. *Ibid.* 12. 3. 48
31. *Ibid.* 10. 14. 29; 11. 2. 43

32. *Ibid.* 11. 27. 23
33. *Ibid.* 11. 29. 34
34. S. Bhattacharya, *Op. Cit.*, I. 210
35. *Bhagavata Purana*, 7. 9. 44
36. *Ibid.* 12. 13. 23

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God-Experience in Saiva Siddhanta

Introduction

God experience is the starting point, the continual sadhana and the culmination of the Saiva Siddhanta scheme of life. Saiva Siddhanta professes to be Jnana Marga, the path of knowledge, to salvation, though its canonical works are the Tiru Murai Bhakti literature. Its philosophical-theological basis is contained in the 12 works called the Meikanda Sastra. The most important of these 12 works is the Sivajnanapotham. It consists of 12 sutras to which its author, Meikandar has added a short vartikam or commentary. The first three sutras are purely logical: the first sutra proves the existence of Pati or Lord, the second that of Pasam or bondage; the third that of Pasu or the individual self. The second three sutras are philosophical: the fourth sutra explains the nature of Pasu; the fifth that of Pasam; the sixth that of Pati. The third three sutras deal with the means of attaining salvation and the last three sutras deal with the last stage of salvation. Saiva Siddhanta deals with Pati, Pasu and Pasam which it calls three Padarthas. Padartha has been rendered as eternal reality and therefore Western scholars have tended to neglect saiva Siddhanta as a pluralistic system of Indian Philosophy. But as Max Muller pointed out in connection with Nyaya and Vaiseshika, Padartha must be rendered simply by the "meaning of the term" (cf. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*) The experience of the Saivites must give this "meaning of the terms".

Breakthrough

The starting point of Saiva Siddhanta is dissatisfaction with worldly knowledge, Pasa Jnanam and attempt to get self knowledge, Pasa Jnanam which leads to Pati Jnanam. This dissatisfaction and desire arise in the self when it is believed to have reached the stage of Mala Paribhakam, the spiritual maturity which is followed by the saktinipatham or descent of Grace. The initiative is Siva's. This is the initial statement in the first stanza of Tiru-Untiyar, the first of the 14 Meikanda Sastras:

Akalamai yarum ariv (u) aritu ap-Porul
Sakalamai vantat (u) enru unti para.

"That One that is beyond space (and time), that is unknowable by any one Came in space and time..."

Manikkavacakar declares: "Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show thy mighty Feet, to me who lay mere slave, meaner than a cur, essential grace more precious than a mother's love..." (Sivapuranam)

The purpose of this breakthrough is that we may become Itself: "Tanaka-t-tantatu..." which may have two meanings: "gave spontaneously" or "that we may become Itself". Brahman is Absolute Reality: Sat-chit-ananda Sivam. Beside it there can be nothing else: Then, how come that this self of mine is an experienced reality? The Advaita of Sankara, eschewing the illusory Maya theory and understanding Maya as the ineffable anirvacaniya Bija Sakti or creative power of Brahman, may be called the Advaita of Grace: Siva's Sakti being understood as active Grace and the human self as passive (or received grace; Siva as active wisdom (ariyum arivu) and the human self as received, wisdom (arivikka ariyum arivu). "Those [who know] themselves know the Owner of their selves". Says Tiru-Untiyar: "Avan ivan anatu avan arulak: my self is what He has become by His Grace; or spontaneous Self-giving: Tannaiye tantan". Our consciousness of our self is the consciousness of Siva's Grace.

Forestalling Grace: Gratia Praeveniens

The Saivite saints' God experience was at first unexpected, unasked for and sudden. Sundarar's "taduttatkonda puranam" is a

classic example. Manikkavacakar's "Mutti nerī ariyata" hymns his great surprise at the unmerited reception of the grace of conversion.

"To me who toiled and moiled, mid fools that know not way of final peace".

He taught the way of pious love; and that 'old deeds' might cease and flee,

Purging the foulness of my will, made me pure bliss, took for His own;—

'Twas thus the Father gave me grace: O rapture! who so blest as I?" Tirunavukkarasar who had adopted Jainism was also forcefully re-converted to faith in Siva by Siva's grace.

Purifying Grace

"Thou cam'st in grace, that all things false might flee

True wisdom, gleaming bright in splendour true,

To me, void of all wisdom, blissful Lord!

O Wisdom fair, causing unwisdom's self to flee far off".
(Sivapurānam)

"Thou entering stood'st by me fast bound in sin;

As one who says, 'I'm sin's destroyer, come'.

(Tiruvacakam v. 88)

"What other sinners are there like to me, the lowest cur?

Yet not a whit from me to sever is Thy sacred will..." (ibid v. 145). And scores of such confessions of sins are confessions of the Lord's abounding mercy. Such passages so natural to the universal human condition of sinfulness express the experience of the Saivite saints. They cannot be invalidated by any philosophising. Sivajñānapoṭham in its ninth sūtra speaks about the purification of the Paśu by jñāna which it identifies with the Panchakshara.

"All falsehood am I; false is my heart; and love; yet if I but weep

Thy sinful servant may gain Thee..." (Tiruvacakam v. 360)

To weep for forgiveness is itself recognized as a great grace.

And after this initial breakthrough the sadaka may attempt any of the Margas or any combination of the Margas to attain union with God. The Agamas give the fourfold stages of Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana. Tirumantiram (stz 1502) briefly enumerates the socio-religious activities that form the stage of Charya: lighting lamp in the temple, culling flowers for Puja in the temple, singing devotional hymns, assisting in the service of abhisheka, cooking prasada constitute this charya or Dasa Marga. The reward to which this alone is believed to lead in heaven is Salokya. Tirumantiram (1496) enumerates the psycho-physical practices that constitute the next Kriya stage: performing Atmartha Puja at home, reading scriptures, reciting prayers, Japa or repetition of the Mantra, meditation, austerities for attainment of self-control, truthfulness, purity of thought and action, love and almsgiving constitute this Kriya stage or Satpura Marga which is believed to lead to the nearness of God, Samiyya in heaven. The next stage of yoga inculcates some of the practices taught by Patanjali. It is believed to help attain Sarupya Mukti in heaven. For the practice of Charya the Samiya Diksha and for the second and third stages Visessa Diksha should have been received for the meritorious fulfillment of these duties. Patanjali just mentions Isvarapranidhana once and does not refer to it any more. The Saivite gives great importance to this Sadhana of offering all one's actions to God. The Atma Puja consists of offering eight flowers to God eight times a day, remembering His eight attributes and surrendering the eight parts that constitute the self to the Lord. When the Sadhaka is well established in Charya, Kriya and Yoga the most powerful descent of Grace called Tivirata Saktinipatam takes place. The yearning for union becomes intense, making the devotee feel the Night of the Soul as the Christian mystics call it. The four great Nayanmars have felt it, especially Tirunavukkarasar and most of all Manikkavachakar. The former sings:

“First she (the soul) took in His Name by the ear. His nature and attributes came in next. “What is His dwelling?” she asked immediately. Passionately attached, she became His slave and handmaid; Mother and father she abandoned that very day. All worldly conventions forgotten, her own good name lost. The maid started, the Feet of the Lord alone in her mind”.

(Tirunavukkarasar Tevaram).

Experience of Absence and Presence

Having lost the felt-experience of her Lord the Saivite soul sends all sorts of messengers to plead with her Lord not to abandon her: "Thou, Kuyil small, rehearsing thy sweet melody in the grove of honeyed fruits.

Listen to this: The Gracious One Who thought not of heaven but entered this earth Made men His own; the One Who abhorred not the flesh, entered my soul And became my Experience: the Spouse of the Fawn-eyed-one that gently rules; Go, darling, call Him back to me!" (Tiruvacakam XVIII, 13).

Remembering past joys of union the soul sings:

"In love, Thy servant's soul and body thrilling through And melting all my heart with rapturous bliss, Thou didst bestow sweet grace beyond my being's powers, And I for this what return can give? . . ." (ibid XXII, 8).

All such outpourings are the expressions of Siva Bhakti which always accompanies the performance of Charya, Kriya and Yoga of the Siva Agamas. When during our dialogue exchanges the devout Saivite is requested to share with us his or her experience to Sivanubhava during the Siva Puja, whether at home or in the Temple we are given only the Agamic rules of the Siva Atmartha Puja, or Parartha Puja and their Agamic explanations which may leave us cold. But when the bhakti poems that accompany them are sung with soul-stirring bhakti, we do receive a share of the ineffable experience which provides the strength to keep the devout Saivite spotlessly pure in thought, word and action.

Bhakti

"Of what use is bathing in the Ganges or Kaviri?
Of what use is going to Kongu land or Comorin's point?
Of what use is the dip in the boisterous sea?
Theirs alone is release who call on the Name of the Lord".
"Of what use, the chanting of the Vedas, of what use the Yajnas? . . .

No release except for those who think incessantly on the Lord".

(Tirunavukkarasar)

And Tirumular sings in unison: "No tapas is useful except to those who interiorly melt themselves into the Lord". Therefore the twelve books of the Canonical Saiva Scriptures are all Bhakti Psalms. We see the devout Saivite melts into the Lord while reciting these psalms or muttering the Japa with the Panchakshara i.e., Namahshivaya or Sivayanamah, according to the Diksha he or she has received. Sings Manikkavachakar:

"The mother's foreseeing care her infant feeds,
Thou deignest with greater mercy and love to forestall sinful me,
Melting my flesh, flooding my soul with inward Light,
Inward rapture's honeyed sweetness Thou showerest
Infusing joy into every pore, my Precious One, Siva Peruman!
I've followed Thee close, I've seized Thee, I hold Thee!
Whither, now, grace imparting would'st Thou rise?"

Jnana Pada

The fourth part in each Agama is called the Jnana Pada which is believed to lead to Sayujya Mukti: union of Life. And Saiva Siddhanta professes above all to be the best Jnana Marga. In the practice of the Ashtanga or Raja Yoga, after the external exercises of the first four limbs, comes the fifth, Pratyahara or the withdrawal of the sense organs from their objects. This is followed by the exercises of Dharana or concentration of the mind continuously on one truth. When and how this Dharana passes into the next stage of Dhyana and when and how this Dhyana passes into the last stage of Samadhi is not very clear. In the Buddhist techniques of meditation too when and how the preceding exercises produce the state of Satori or enlightenment is not clear. In the Christian experience how and when the Cloud of Unknowing gives place to Eternal Union is not clear. But the goal is there for certain and it beckons to men to come. "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is". This is expressed in Tamil: Vindavar Kandilar, Kandavar vindilar: those who have experienced It have not described It and those who have described It have not experienced It.

The meditative process of reaching Sivanandam, Delightful, Supernal or Sivanulhavam is called by the name of Dasa Karyas and consists of ten stages:

The first stage is *Tattva Rupam*, where the soul meditates on the evolution of the categories which compose the subjective knower and the objective known universe. The Tattvas of the Sankhya are expanded in the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy and the soul meditates how its human reality is composed of these tattvas.

The next stage is *Tattva Darsanam* or understanding the nature of these categories as the products of the principle of Maya. The third is *Tattva Suddhi* or discerning one's self as distinct from all these categories. This discernment cuts asunder the bondage of the soul to the products of Maya.

Thus in the fourth stage the self understands itself as *Atma Rupam* or spiritual form.

The fifth is *Atma Darsanam* realizing the self in its intrinsic nature Svarupalakshanam: as pure consciousness which, however, as said above is passive: arivikka ariyum arivu.

In the next stage of *Atma Suddhi* the self separating itself from the tattvas identifies itself with Divine Grace which it has experienced as constitutive of itself: avan ivan avatu avan arulali.

In the seventh stage the self recognizes itself as *Siva Rupam*, or the form of Siva. The introductory stanza of Sivajnanapotham inculcates that those who have realized themselves would have realized that which possesses them: tammai unarntu tamai udayatan unarvaru. "The way to realize Thee, O Supreme One, is to realize one's own true nature and be centred in Grace", sings Thayumanavar. In the eighth stage the self freed from I-ness and My-ness perceives Siva in all things, in *Siva Darsanam* in an objective way. In the next stage the self by the practice of 'Sivoham Bhavana' realizes that the real doer in it is Siva and no one else. Manikkavacakar sings:

That very day my soul, my body all to me
pertaining, didst Thou not take as Thine own,
Thou like a Mountain strong! when me Thou madest Thy slave

And this day is there any hindrance found in me?"

And Thayumanavar repeats that: "Actions of mine have I done, I have rendered all into Thy hands long ago...". This penultimate stage Saiva Siddhanta calls *Siva Yogam* or Advaita Mukti, in the Turiya state of consciousness.

Beyond and transcending it is the Saiva Siddhanta's Turiyatita or *Siva Bhogam*. Manikkavacakar sings "Turiyamum iranta Sudare Porril! Brilliant Light transcending the Turiya state! Telivaritakiya Felive Porril O Clarity beyond all comprehension!" In this tenth and last stage of Sivanubhavam transcending subject-object relationship, Bliss Supreme, Sivanandam is enjoyed, which is the stage of Sayujya, Jivan Mukti, while waiting for Videha Mukti or shedding off of the mortal coil. Jivan Muktas walk the earth fully absorbed in Sivanandam, as radiant beings guiding others to the same state. It is their experiences that are recorded in the Saivite Sacred Scriptures. Manikkavacakar rises to this stage when in his Hirudaya Sloka he sings:

"This day in me in grace Thou risest bright, like the Sun bidding from out my mind all darkness flee!

On this Thy Nature manifest I thought beyond all thought!

Beside Thee all that is is nought-

Moving ever, - as atom ever wasting, - Thou art One!

Siva, dwelling in Perunturai's sacred Shrine!

Thou art not any of these; without Thee nothing is;

Who are they who can know Thee as Thou art?"

Tiru Untiyar which we have quoted above describes this transcendental Experience in a good many stanzas:

"How can I say, 'It was thus'?

It was thus!...

It is not knowledge that knows..." (Stz. 4)

"When our actions have ceased and 'we' have ceased,

The Lord's own activity...

He gave Himself!..." (stz. 5)

"The Self-Existent One that is immanent without being immersed,

If you look at it will disappear...

Look without looking..." (stz. 11)

"When thought has ceased outside and inside
It will be bliss..." (stz. 16)

This kind of looking beyond looking 'Nokkariya nokke' Experience beyond experience 'nunnariya nunnarive', is the Turiyatita Experience of Saiva Siddhanta.

Conclusion

The Kathopanishad 1.2.23 had declared: "The Self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained only by the one whom the Self chooses. To such a one the Self reveals His own nature". This experience, therefore, is a pure gift of Grace. "I shall give you a divine eye, behold..." says the Lord in Bhagavad Gita (XII.8). "Avan arule kannaka-k-kanin allal: unless seen with His Grace as the eye, He cannot be seen". declares Tirunavukkarasar. "Avan arula allatu ivan avan ahen; except through His Grace this self will never become that Self", says Tiru Untiyar. Thayumanavar, therefore in rapture sings: "By grace behold all things, He said.. Of Me and thee think not in thy heart as two, said He... There Thought was born, where Thought died and became pure. All experiences are there. There too I the Seer stand Non-dual". This is the culmination, the transcending Sivanubhava or Sivananda which is eternal.

Aikiya Alayam,

Ignatius Hirudayam

Madras

Integration and Harmony in the Gita

Man appears to be a phenomenon, a mystery to himself. He is a multi-dimensional being having different elements of matter (anna), life (prana), mind, (manas), intelligence (vijñana), and bliss (ananda)¹. There is a self-evident hierarchical order among these

ements. When this hierarchy is kept, as the lower grades being subservient to the higher ones man acts from the highest level, man feels unity, integrity and harmony within himself. But the problem is that today he is aware of a discord within himself. Since man is a self-conscious being he can and does feel it.

And it is to this man of discord and disintegration, the Bhagavad Gita, the divine song, offers a satisfactory solution. The aim of the Gita is to help evolve a man of complete harmony and integration. This is achieved in the personality of Arjuna, who, in the words of S. Radhakrishnan, is the representative human soul seeking to reach perfection and peace.²

II. Yoga as integration

The word *yoga* and many of its derivatives are used in Gita in a vast number of times. Though the same word gets different meanings on various occasions, there are quite a few which are more general and common. The word *yoga* comes from the root *yuj*, which means to yoke, join or unite. Deriving from this root-meaning Gita, quite often uses the word in the sense of 'integration'.³ Thus *yunjita* (Gita 6:10), *yogasthah* (2:48), *Yogasya* (6:44), *yogah* (6:23; 2:48; 6:38), *yogat* (6:37), *yogayuktah* (5:6; 7: 8,27), *yogasamiddham* (6:37) etc. gives the meaning 'integration'. But at the same time, *yoga* is used in the sense of 'means' (*marga*) or of 'spiritual exercise', as R. C. Zaehner puts it.⁴ The expressions like *yunjate* (6:28; 7:1), *yogabalena* (8:10), *yogasamsiddha* (4:38), *yogasevaya* (6:20) etc. convey the meaning: practice or 'spiritual exercise' for integration. Thus *yoga* is both the process which results in integration and the goal 'integration' itself. Setting ourselves in this background let us try to see the invitation of the Gita to integration, which begins and reaches its goal in the personality of Arjuna.

I. Arjunavishadayoga: portrait of a disintegrated personality

In the *Arjunavishadayoga*, i. e., the first chapter of the Gita, we find a completely disintegrated man in Arjuna. And this is the starting point of the Gita. Here Arjuna is very much aware of the deeper discords within him. So accepting these discords, crises or existential predicament, Arjuna seeks the help of Krishna: the

human disciple sits at the feet of the divine teacher (2:7). Arjuna feels the crisis at different levels of his personality. In reality these crises are only the different experiential dimensions of the basic disintegration of the human nature.

1. Moral Crisis

In the battlefield of Kurukshetra Arjuna is really in a moral crisis. He came to Kurukshetra to do his *dharma*, to wage a righteous war. By birth he was a Kshatria. According to the aryan ideal he had come to fight. But having asked Krishna to place his chariot in between the two armies (1:21, 22) and having had a vision of the whole battle field (1:27), his moral consciousness undergoes a thorough change. And he experiences the moral crisis within him. This crisis affects the whole function of the body (1:28, 29, 30). He calls the very duty *papa* (sin) and *adharma* (unrighteousness). He sees sin in killing his relatives and *gurus* (1:34-36) and in the destruction of his family (*kulam*) (1:39-45). He himself accepts the moral crisis happened within himself and asks Krishna to give him the right solution (2:7). He acknowledges that his understanding is confused (2:7). And he submits himself completely to the Lord for a solution.

2. Emotional Crisis

It is the whole personality of Arjuna that is in crisis, not a part of it. His body, psyche, buddhi, consciousness etc., are all in a crisis. Finding his relatives and *gurus* in the rival camp (1:34) even though they are on the side of *adharma*, he hesitates (1:35-37, 46). As Radhakrishnan opines, it is not a question of violence or non-violence, but of using violence against one's own friends now turned enemies.⁵ Thus emotionally he is in a crisis either to fight against the relatives and the *gurus* or to allow *adharma* to win.

3. Physical and Nervous Crisis

This problem affects his body and the whole nervous system. His limbs droop down, his mouth is parched up, his body shivers (1:29), the Gandiva (his bow) slips from his hands (1:30) and he cannot even stand (1:30). Remember it is the state of the greatest

warrior of that time. He is not his real self. Thus in general the whole personality of Arjuna, who represents the entire humanity, is in trouble.

4. The Basic Problem

All the discords at different levels of his personality are only the external effects of an underlying, basic problem. Krishna thoroughly conscious of it and therefore attempts at giving a complete solution to the basic disintegration or discord in the personality of Arjuna. His refusal to fight points to this underlying factor. He refuses, only because of ignorance and passion (18: 7,8). He himself accepts the fact that he is overcome by weakness and ignorance (2:7). The thirst for a complete solution is already implied in the request of the human disciple. His request to Krishna is to tell him what *sreyah* (2:7) is for him. The *sreyah* means the highest good, the supreme solution. And he repeats the same question (3:2; 5:1; etc.) many a time in the Gita. It is the desire of the human disciple to get the real solution to the basic problem of disintegration. And Krishna's answer is, not a clear-cut one, to action or inaction, but to lead him to a basic attitude, awareness, a higher consciousness.

II. Gitayoga—the means to integration

The means which the Gita proposes for the attainment of integration can be called *gitayoga*: It is the yoga of Krishna who is the *yogeswara*, the Lord of *yoga* (18:78). But this yoga is not one among the many *yogas*, like *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *jnanayoga*. For it synthesizes all these *yogas*⁶ and proposes the best means to make a man completely integrated within himself and be in harmony with nature. The way in which the *yogas* are blended together brings out the synoptic insight or all-inclusive character of the Gita, Sri Aurobindo finds the means suggested by the Gita as one single *yoga*, in which the knowledge, work and the heart's longing become one in supreme unification⁷. Radhakrishnan also opines that "work, knowledge and devotion are complementary both when we seek the goal and after we attain it"⁸. But as men are of different types, viz., reflective, emotional or active, Radhakrishnan finds meaning in giving more importance to any of these three aspects, according to one's own nature, but without the exclusion of the other aspects or dimen-

sions⁹. Thus we can take these three, knowledge, work and devotion as the three dimensions or aspects of the single *yoga* which the Gita proposes. And consequently we cannot say that one dimension is superior to the other, in any way.

1. Jnana dimension

Jnana dimension gets an important role in the Gita. The entire Gita is an answer to the eagerness of the human mind to know and to realize. The human disciple is eager to know what is *sreyal* (the highest good) for him (2:7). And all the following questions and clarifications imply this basic question (3:1,2; 2:54; 4:4; 5:1; 6:33-34; 8:1; 10:17; 11:3,4; 12:11; 17:1). The Gita visualizes the real knowledge (*jnana*) as an aspect of the real means to liberation i. e. integration and harmony. By the real knowledge of the reality one becomes an integrated person and at the same time he experiences the subsisting harmony with nature as a whole and with the Absolute. But the man of real knowledge is also a devotee (7:17). Since he achieves integrity, he rises above delusion (10:3), above *samsara* (13:23); he attains liberation (13:34), the highest prize (14:1) and the supreme peace (5:29; 3:28, 43; 7:1). But in the way to real knowledge, desire is an obstruction (3:37, 39); 'wisdom is overcast by this' (3:39). So the eradication of desires is a must. By withdrawing the senses which are the seat of desire (3:40), from the objects (2, 58; 68; 3:41; 18:51; 4:19), one can get rid of desires. At the same time giving up of the fruits of action is another element in this process (2:51; 3:25). On the way to realization, faith (*sraddha*) (4:39; 7:1) and devotion (*bhakti*) (18:55) have their own important roles. The master (*guru*) also gives a helping hand in this journey (4:34).

2. Karma dimension

In the Gita, *karma* gets a new dimension. It is this new dimension of *karma* that seems to be quite unique and perfect which the *karma* concept ever got. The Gita accepts the fact that no man can remain still even for a moment without doing some work (3:15; 2:4). But at the same time *karma* (action), i. e., desirous act (*kamyakarma*) does bind man. So man is in a dilemma. Experiencing this existential predicament, Krishna advises Arjuna of the new dimension of *karma*, i. e., *nishkamakarma*. But the practice of *nishkamakarma*

presupposes a true understanding of man's essential nature. So Krishna conveys to Arjuna the knowledge about the nature of man and the dynamism of activity (1:41, 42). One has to distinguish the *purusha* from the *prakrti*, the *ksetranja* from the *ksetra* (13:1) and to realize that all actions are due to the *prakrti* (3:27ff) and the true self is untainted by *karma*. So one has to achieve the real knowledge that his action is influenced by *prakrti* and the *gunas* (14:19ff, 3:27). So the advice of Krishna is to do work (2:18; 37; 3:19; 4:15; 7:7; 11:33; 16:24; 18:6, 70), but without the desire for its fruits (2:47; 4:18 etc). This is *nishkamakarma*. In the words of P. N. Srinivasachari: "the theory of *nishkamakarma* does not counsel renunciation of all activity. What is recommended is not *karmalyaga* (renunciation of action) but *karmaphalalyaga* (renunciation of the fruits of action). The Gita does not ordain absolute inactivity, but only insists on un-attached activity; freedom in action, not from action¹⁰. Even *Isvara* employs himself in activity (3:22, 23). Here we have to be aware of one thing, i. e., the actions should be devoid of desire, and also be burnt by the fire of knowledge (4:19). In other words mere *karma*, without the illumination of *jnana* is only mere *kamyakarma*. But when one acts after achieving the spirit of disinterestedness from the illumination of *jnana* (3:27) his action becomes *nishkamakarma*. For the practice of *nishkamakarma* the Gita advises to offer all the works to the Lord. Thus if we act with detachment and dedication we will be able to attain our integration as well as liberation of others¹¹. Because *nishkamakarma* does not bind us, but at the same time liberates us from *samsara* (3:19). Krishna advises Arjuna, being in the state of *nishkamakarma*, to act for the welfare of the world (*lokasamgraha*). Thus the *karma* dimension of the *layoga* gets a sociological aspect too. It impels man, having achieved self integration, to work for the integration of all men.

Bhakti dimension

The *bhakti* dimension runs throughout the Gita in its *yoga* integration. First of all the whole Gita is primarily a dialogue between the divine teacher and the human disciple. The attitude and awareness of Arjuna is completely that of a devotee to the Lord (7). Worship of the personal God is the easier way for the illiterate, and the weak (9: 32; 11:53; 12: 1-5). But in this *bhakti*, faith (*addha*) has a great role to play (6:47; 9:23 and 17:3). The *bhakti*

should be loyal and be devoted to the Lord (4:3); he should think always of Him (6:14; 8:7), meditate on Him (9:22; 12:5; 8:10; 18:65; 12:8); offer everything to Him with love (9:26); work for Him (9:27; 11:55; 12:6); worship Him (29:30; 10; 10:17:18). All, even the sinful can attain liberation (9:20), at any stage of life (8:10). And the result of this devotion, love, surrender, worship, meditation, offering etc., is of absolute value. Because the Lord will reveal to the *bhakta* the highest mystery (4:3), and the *bhakta* will subsist in the Lord (6:14), go to Him (7:33; 9:25; 34; 10:10; 11:55; 18:65), enter into Him (18:55), dwell in Him (12:8) and share in his mode of life (13:18).

Here, the important thing to be remembered is that these three are not separate, independent *margas*, but complementary aspects of the *yoga* which the Gita proposes. Thus *bhakti* is not something entirely different from, or disconnected to *jnana* and *karma* (7:17; 18:55; 8:7; 4:39); the man of knowledge is also a man of devotion at the same time (7:17). And the knowledge is a means for the *nishkamakarma* (3:25ff). These three together form the means to integration. Thus there is no conflict between *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma*, between intelligence, love and action.

IV. Levels of Integration

Integration is the goal of the *gitayoga*, in a sense. But at the same time, we can find different levels or dimensions of integration. These levels may not be and need not be separate and different from one another. But all the more they form the integration of the whole as there is only one reality.

1. Primary levels of integration

The Gita places the knowledge of the nature of reality as a requirement for the achievement of integration of the self. Gita 3:42 shows a gradation of faculties in a human person: The senses are said to be superior to the body, the mind is superior to the senses, the intellect is superior to the mind and *atman* is superior to intellect. Basing on this text Radhakrishnan opines that man is not self but possesses self and can become self.¹² After explaining the reality of gradation, the Gita finds the uncontrolled senses as the basic cause of disintegration (2:67). So as a beginning the

senses must be curbed (2:61). But it is the mind which has to control the senses (3:7; 6:2) because the mind is superior to the senses (3:42). Even then the mind itself is restless, turbulent and difficult to control as the wind (6:34). Therefore the mind itself should be controlled by the soul (6:25). According to R. C. Zaehner, the soul is the organ of integration in the Gita.¹³ This soul too should be subjected to the self because it is not exempted from the attack of desire (3:40; 2:63). Thus in a way we can say that the integration means the subjection of all the factors of the human personality to the self – of senses to mind, mind to soul and soul to self.¹⁴ It is an act of turning all these powers Godward.¹⁵ Moreover this integration is achieved on the basis of the knowledge of human nature and the function of desire, *guna*, and *karma*. As a result of this knowledge when man destroys desire (3:39), subjecting senses to the mind, mind to soul and soul to self, his actions become *nishkama-karma*. At the same time whatever he does will not be for his own sake but for the sake of God (9:27; 11:55).

Union with the Absolute

The integration of the human individual culminates in the union with the Supreme Being. After having acquired the preliminary levels of integration what the aspirant has to do is to try for union with the Absolute (2:61). The result of this attempt is obtained in 6:30. The culmination of the integration is not merely union with Brahman, but it is an act of becoming Brahman (5:24; 7:7), becoming one with Brahman (14:26; 18:53). But by this, it is not claimed that the Gita holds the advaitic stand; because the *Atman* is only a portion of God (15:7). Here, Radhakrishnan's view seems to be more meaningful. For him, it is not *sarupya* (identity) with God, but only *sadarmya* (similarity) with God¹⁶. This supreme integration is an entering into the being of God (8:5). This state may be called the state of *sthitaprajna* or *jivanmukti*. The nature of the man of steadied wisdom is explained in 2:54ff. In short this state is similar to that of God. Thus, as R. C. Zaehner writes: the goal is achieved "by the integration of matter into spirit by purification of the total self, and by achieving the original oneness which is characteristic of the self-in-itself as it is of Brahman."¹⁷

3. Harmony with the universe and the society

One who has integrated within oneself, will surely be in harmony with the society and with the universe. Because as Radhakrishnan says, by integration a new kind of relatedness to the world is achieved.¹⁸ The integrated person will be in complete harmony with the social order, set up by God (4:13). It is because of this fact that Krishna advises Arjuna of doing his caste duty. Moreover, Krishna is the author of the moral law (14:27). So the integrated one who is in perfect union with God has to live in harmony with the moral order.

Further, since he has attained complete integration he would be able to see all beings in himself and himself in all beings (6:29). This is at the same time, the understanding and the acceptance of the reality that the Supreme Being dwells in the hearts of all (15:19). On this background it is easy to understand the idea of *lokasamgraha* (welfare of the universe) (3:20). Krishna advises Arjuna to work for the welfare of the world. Action of the integrated man should be for the world's maintenance and progress. The underlying aim of the detached action should be this welfare of the world. This can be understood as the attempt of an integrated man, for the integration of the whole humanity and for the harmonious blending of the whole reality.

V. *Yogi*: the integrated man

Thus as a result of the practice of *gitayoga*, which expresses itself through *bhakti*, *jnana*, and *karma margas*, one becomes an integrated person or *yogi*. The Gita clearly puts some basic conditions for a *yogi*. He should be a *jnanin* (2:52), and should be always interested in God (2:61). Gita 4:18 points to the fact that a *yogi* should be detached from the world but not of the world. The advice of Krishna to abide in Him (6:15) and to be a devotee of him (10:10) forms the part of the requirements for a *yogi*. The Gita very well describes the nature of an integrated person too. One who has an even-mind (*samatvam*) in success and failure (2:48), who renounces the fruits of action (2:50; 5:12; 8:28), who has the qualities of steady wisdom (2:54ff), who is satisfied in self by self (2:55), who is freed from attachments (2:56; 57), who sees action in inaction and inaction in action (4:18; 5:8, 9), who does *nishkamakarma* (4:20-22), who realizes wisdom as the purifier (4:38), who resists the desire and anger (5:23), who feels that the colds of earth, stones and gold are same (6:8), who keeps the mind

always steady, by subduing the mind and body (6:10), who abides in God always (6:15), who is like a lamp in a windless place (6:19), whose mind rests in self (6:18), whose mind is calm and passions are pacified (6:27), who is freed from all sins (6:18), who sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self (6:29), who loves and honours God and whose innermost self is absorbed in God (6:47), who bears God in mind unceasingly (8:14), who communes with God in Love (10:10), who fixes his thought upon God and serves God with supreme faith (12:2), such a one is a *yogi* or an integrated person. And this *yogi* is freed from births and deaths (2:51), attains perfect peace (5:2), is one with Brahman, the Absolute Reality (6:27); he attains infinite bliss (6:28).

Conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita makes a call to integration and harmony. It is a call to each and every individual of the whole humanity. Further, this call is not only for a personal integration, but also for the welfare of the whole universe. In response to this call of the Gita man has to be in the role of the human disciple who is always ready to obey the divine teacher. Through the practice of *gita yoga* anyone can achieve the integration within himself and be in complete harmony with Nature, just as Arjuna in the battlefield. The Gita is relevant even today, with its unique call to integration for all disintegrated men of the modern world.

Foot Notes

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2. S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 51
3. R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, London, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1969, P 24.
4. *Ibid.*
5. S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 68
6. Sri. Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, Pondicherry, Sri. Aurobindo Ashram, 1980, p. 310.
7. *Ibid.* p. 315, 322.

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9. *Ibid* p. 53
10. P. N. Srinivasachari, *The Ethical Philosophy of the Gita*, Madras, Sri Radhakrishna Math. p. 63
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12. *Ibid.*, p. 55
13. R.C. Zaehner, *op. cit.*, p. 23
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15. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*, p. 309
16. S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit*, p. 76
17. R. C. Zaehner, *op. cit.*, p. 31
18. S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 45

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